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OUT OF THE MESHES.

A STORY.



'Un fonte sorge in lei, che vaghe e monde
A l'acque sì, che i riguardanti asseta
Ma dentro ai freddi suoi cristalli asconde
Di tosco estran malvagita secreta
* * * * *
Lunge la bocca disdegnosa e schiva
Torcete voi dall'acque.'—*Tasso*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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OUT OF THE MESHES.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH THE MAJOR IS A LITTLE PUT OUT.

I CALL him 'the Major,' because wherever he went he was always called 'the Major,' before all other Majors ; but he figured in the Army List as Major Pulfington Belper of the 44th Nowgong Native Infantry (Bengal Establishment), and had just come up on fort duty to Calcutta, direct from the jungles of Shikarpore. He rose on Tuesday at 'gunfire,' visited his sentries, came home, took off his uniform, and as he was coming out once more from his quarters, the native postman presented him with a letter.

This letter was addressed 'Shikarpore,

East Indies,' and then in another hand, 'Try Barrackpore!' and then in a third 'Gone to Fort William.' These details are necessary in order to enable you to understand how the Major was put out on the Tuesday morning. Had that letter been received, as it should have been, on the 15th of October, instead of the 6th of November, the events of the present chapter would never have occurred. The letter was from an old maiden sister residing at Budleigh Salterton, Devon; but before we come to its contents I have a word or two to say about the Major himself.

Although he is rather proud of his physique, and always weighing himself and measuring the girth of his chest, if I had to describe him on a first glance, in one word, I should call him, I think, a *grotesque* man. Upon a shambling ungainly figure he wears the ill-fitting jungly costume he has brought with him from 'up country,' an old shooting jacket, brown trousers, no waistcoat, a black neck-tie round the waist, a pith helmet of droll shape, and a pair of spectacles. His whis-

kers, hair, and moustaches, as is often the case with sandy hair, are spare, lank, and by no means pliant to the art of the hair-dresser. His nose is red, and will keep red, although its owner is the most temperate of Indian officers. Another point—a sore one—which if you wish to approach you must approach with great care—the waist of Captain and Brevet Major Pulfington Belper is more the waist of a Brevet Major than that of a Captain. He seldom walks abroad without that bamboo club you see in his hand, and as for the extrinsic look of dignity which he also carries along with him, I think that if it were either absent or more ill-fitting he would not be so grotesque as he at present appears.

And now to pierce the husk and get at the mind and soul—the grotesque inner man concealed within this grotesque exterior. He is very weak, very good-natured, very vain, rather selfish, very sentimental, and very warm-hearted. There is a deference to authorities and rank about him, so ridiculously excessive, that you would think that the *Great Snob-*

ographer would have chronicled him, had he met him; and yet no one could be two minutes in the Major's company, without perceiving that this oddly dressed awkward worshipper of the big-wig was a simple-hearted gentleman of much refined feeling. His veneration is different from that of the Cavalier to the Royal Martyr, and seems local, Asiatic, more than royal—imperial. Does any such miasma haunt the stately palace tombs of departed officers of state, lurking in their fragrant gardens, their cool fountains, and under their graceful cupolas? Or did the new Mogul, John Company Bahador, take over the imperial *tiselins* and *sizedas*, the head buffetings and ground kissings, along with the Delhi sceptre and the Peacock throne? The Major, like many other Anglo-Indians, was accustomed to *salam*, and he did this with some grace. Indeed there was a presence of true dignity in the midst of his awkwardness, and an absence of true dignity in his self-assertion which were most puzzling.

But perhaps the most contradictory point

of all was the Major's mind. About anything immediately under his nose, a school-girl could give a more sound opinion; but if the subject discussed was at all out of the way, or even geographically removed, say to a distance of thirty miles, then the Major's opinion was likely to be sounder than that of any of his comrades, for his reading was more out of the ordinary track, and his judgment (beyond a radius of thirty miles) was fair. And it was singular how constantly he passed and re-passed this thirtieth milestone in ordinary conversation, in contrast with the practical common-place people with whom his lot was cast. There seemed to be a law that he should never say anything that was not intensely idiotic, or very good.

But we are keeping him waiting a little too long. During all this time, he has been busily deciphering his sister's letter, which is very long and very much crossed, after the manner of overland letters. We must conclude. In forty-five years Major Pulfington Belper had never made an enemy, never made

anybody fall in love with him, never done anything which Sir Lancelot of the Lake or Sir James Outram would have blushed at. Also in all that time he had hardly met man or woman, who did not like him immensely, and did not laugh at him still more immensely.

The letter of Miss Anne Belper referred chiefly to the affairs of the village of Budleigh Salterton, which do not come within the province of this narrative. This was one paragraph near the end of it:—

‘By the by, I am forgetting—Charley Simpkin, the eldest son of a great friend of mine here, is going to India on the 14th September. He is a very nice good-looking young man, and, as I hear, of excellent principles. I am rather confusing the matter and forgetting whether he lands at Madras or Calcutta, but when you meet him pray be kind to him. Mrs Simpkin is one of my oldest friends. I think I heard his steamer was the *Babelmandeb*.’

Here the Major’s difficulties fairly begin.

He must positively find out whether this Mr Charles Simpkin is coming to Calcutta, for he knows the *Babelmandeb* is hourly expected. But to do this he must go to the United Service Club; and he feels that he has come from the jungles, and has no fashionable clothes, and people in Calcutta are very exacting in the subject of dress. His tailor has disappointed him, or he would have had some by this time. The Club represents Calcutta, the seat of Government—Government itself. Many of the highest functionaries are usually there, and the Governor-General himself is often as good as present in the person of his splendid Aide-de-camp, Captain Lemesurier, to say nothing of a bosom friend of the latter, Captain Spink of the Body Guard. On the other hand, the monthly letter from Budleigh Salterton is the sole link between Major Pulfington Belper and the land of his fathers. It speaks of home as well as of the yellow gorse which crowns the red sandstone cliffs of Devon. To allow Mr Charles Simpkin to land in India without a welcome, seems the

same in his eyes as refusing the first boon his family have claimed for five-and-twenty years. In the end, the brave officer buttoned his shabby coat about his chest and trudged off towards the Club, but not until after a severe struggle in his strangely constituted mind, which proceeded from the conflict of two principles, or perhaps two eccentric offshoots of the same principle—the Major's excessive reverence.

‘Here he is!’

There must be something peculiar about a gentleman who is received with the cry of ‘here he is!’ by all the members of so decorous an establishment as a Club directly he enters it. Five voices raised this shout, five members of the Civil Government of India. All five were sipping their brandy and soda-water in the cool of the verandah, and sprawling on huge cane-work fabrics which could not be called mere arm-chairs. All five were dressed in dandy blue frock-coats, white hats, and buff trousers, and were in Calcutta studying to pass the college. All five were considered very fast, but as Calcutta amusements

are not numerous their dissipations seemed chiefly confined to buying a great many horses and buggies, and running heavily into debt in the books of the *Judahgunge* Bank.

‘Hulloa, Major, how did you sleep last night?’

‘Hulloa, Major, how’s the “crow-bar” this morning?’ (this was some billiard-table wit.)

‘No, no, I know what the Major wants, four to one against “Villikins” for the Covenanted Handicap.’

‘Any news from Bagdad this morning?’

The Major had seized the Army List, and had discovered that Mr Charles Simpkin was a cadet on the Bengal establishment—whilst these questions were being simultaneously fired at him. As it was quite impossible that he could answer them all at once, he selected the last—which happened to be a mysterious reference to the great Calcutta beauty, Julia Wotherspoon.

‘I say, young fellow, you mustn’t really make allusions to the daughter of an Opium Commissioner, in this public manner. She’s

really a very fine girl, and it'll be a long time before she thinks of a boy like you. Why, she was barely civil to me last night at the band. I don't know what's come to the young women now-a-days. Hey !'

'I think she likes you, Major.'

'Well, to tell you the truth, I thought she did at first, but you can never tell. We mustn't really discuss ladies in this way, though. I think she'll look higher than any of us—you know mercenary marriages have been common in India for a long time. Did not *Crishnu* marry *Ruchmi*, the goddess of wealth—married her for her money, hey !'

'I am sorry you are so disturbed in your feelings, Major. There never yet was a *field-officer* that could endure the toothache patiently.'

It was a fact that the Major, a most susceptible man, had really fallen in love with the *Bulbul of Bagdad*, as he called her in one of his most idiotic of moods. And on the subject of his sudden regard for her he had already taken into his confidence these and

several other members of the Club. His five young friends also loved Miss Wotherspoon. They rode with her, laughed with her, flirted with her, and nudged and whispered together about her in quiet corners, contemning other beauties, to the disgust of mercenary mammas. They had entered themselves for the same prize in love as well as in the handicap of 'Covenanted' Bengal civilians. And far from regarding their rival, the Major, with any feelings of ill-will and jealousy, they were all the better friends with him on that account. They fleeced him at billiards, drove him about Calcutta, laughed at him, and approached the topic of their common weakness with great frankness and good humour. 'Twas in this manner that that paradoxical emotion, human love, first showed its symptoms in the breasts of those worthy but dissipated young men, Messrs Helter, Skelter, Pelter, Welter, and Mr Chiffney Chaffney.

'Major!' said the latter gentleman, a small, dark, pert-looking young man with a reputation for wit—and receiving no reply, for

the Major had suddenly remembered again the object of his visit to the Club, and was deep in the morning paper—the Bengal *Hurkaru*, Mr Chiffney Chaffney repeated more emphatically ‘Major Pulfington Belper!’

‘Good heavens!’ said the Major with sudden horror; ‘we regret to have to announce the demise, from an attack of cholera morbus, of Lieut.-Col. Dowling, C.B., Hon. Company’s Resident at the court of His Highness the Nawaub of Nawaubgunge—’

‘Major Pulfington Belper,’ said Mr Chiffney Chaffney once more.

‘Yes, yes; what is it?’

‘I wish to ask you a question!’

‘All right—this is very important news from Nawaubgunge.’

‘Might I ask you the address of your tailor?’

A great deal of laughter followed this speech, and indeed almost every speech that had yet been spoken, as the young men, though not always witty, seemed to have an uninterrupted flow of animal spirits. And to increase

the Major's bewilderment, two other members entered as the words passed Mr Chiffney Chaffney's lips. One seemed a genuine Pall-Mall dandy, and the other a Calcutta copy of the same article, whose coat and whiskers had suffered slightly from the mildew of the monsoon, and whose liver had also been affected by that trying period. These were Captains Lemesurier, the Aide-de-camp, and his bosom friend and copyist, Spink of the Body Guard. These gentlemen sat apart, as they hated the young civilians, who had rather cut them out as leaders of fashion, and whom they affected to call 'school-boys.'

'I don't think that an officer should come in such a dress to the Club!' said Captain Spink of the poor Major.

'An officer! Who?'

'He's a Major—named Belper, I think.'

'Oh—aw—aw—I see now; by officer you mean, aw—aw—Company's officer.'

'You are a Company's officer just now,' said Captain Spink sternly.

'Aw—aw—I catch the allusion, I mean

wegular Company's officers—a wum lot—native officers ! ’

‘ I must inform you, Captain Lemesurier, that the Body Guard of the Governor-General is composed entirely of native troops—’

‘ Who’s talking of Cavalwy ? ’ drawled the Aide-de-camp. These skirmishes between the bosom friends were frequent, and instead of imperilling their friendship seemed to be the condition of its vitality.

‘ Oh, that ’s a different thing,’ said the other Captain, much pacified. A black servant in flowing white robes here brought two cups of tea, which the officers in their huge arm-chairs proceeded lazily to enjoy together with their cheroots, and the cool morning breeze, and the view of the Calcutta *Maidan*, whose broad green expanse was stretched out under their noses. Crowds of busy natives were hurrying along the road before the Club, and afar the rays of the morning sun twinkled upon the bayonets of the Fort sentries, and lit up the river and the flags of the Indiamen there anchored. To the right, English car-

riages whisked by the trim lawns in front of Government House, and far away to the left was a cloud of smoke as dense as that which issued from the fisherman's jar when the seal of Suleiman was removed. This, though objectively it comes from the coal-bunks of the P. and O. Company's steamship *Babelmandeb*, is to cast a shade upon the life of every gentleman now seated in the cool verandah. It breaks, and there comes forth—an enchanter?—no, an enchantress.

But the calm scene is disturbed just now in another way. 'Confound those school-boys!' says Captain Lemesurier in a very audible voice to his friend; and the school-boys, on their side, to the intense horror of Major Pulfington Belper, have come to the determination of 'having some fun' with the splendid captains. They rise like a flight of hornets and settle on some other chairs much nearer, and Mr Chiffney Chaffney begins the ball by offering the Aide-de-camp the odds of four to one on 'Villikins' for the Covenanted Handicap.

Captain Lemesurier looks abstractedly at Mr Chiffney Chaffney, and then turns his eyes away in a dreamy manner. After a few seconds he again suddenly looks Mr Chiffney Chaffney full in the face, and says abruptly,—

‘By the by, did not somebody address me—you, sir?’

But this ingenuity fails to abash Mr Chiffney Chaffney in the least. He replies with great good-humour,—

‘I offered you the odds of four to one about “Villikins” for the Covenanted Handicap.’

‘Covenanted! Covenanted!’ said the Aide-de-camp, with simulated bewilderment. ‘You see, sir, I have so little knowledge of colonial manners. Covenanted! I thought it had something to do with Jews. Aw—aw—I never bet with Jews.’

‘The word “Covenanted,”’ said Mr Chiffney Chaffney, ‘is applied by the East India Directors to their regular civil servants, for reasons best known to those world-renowned but somewhat idiotic traders. And it has this

much to do with Jews, that the younger civilians borrow a great deal of money from Jews, including Turks, infidels, and other heretics, who lend money at 20 per cent.'

The immense laughter of the young men at this speech threw the Captain quite off his balance; he replied with much asperity, and this time with very little drawl,—

'Thank you, you are very kind, but I only bet with people who are grown up.'

'Bet with Welter, then,' said the ready wit, 'he's grown up!' and as far as regarded bulk and fat this statement was true.

The renewed laughter of the young men made Captain Lemesurier very angry indeed. In his reply his drawl had quite disappeared, and he articulated the *r* with the same distinctness that he did in the presence of the Governor-General.

'Look here, sir, look here, gentlemen! I am much obliged to you for your offer of a bet, but I don't bet in India; I am much obliged to you for your society, which I did not in any way seek. Your wit, I dare say, is

very funny, but I don't understand Indian wit, or indeed colonial manners, it being my misfortune to be accustomed only to the usages of another society—where, in the case of impertinence, if the offender is old enough to be brought to book—'

'Gentlemen, gentlemen,' said the Major, who had watched this conflict between the civil and military branches of the service with unspeakable horror, 'this must not go on. It really must not.'

'Stop, Captain Lemesurier,' said Mr Welter in a voice of thunder, 'I'm quite old enough to be brought to book—and let's first consider your speech, "D— these school-boys"—'

But here Mr Welter was in turn interrupted by his friend Mr Helter, who jumped on his back with the cry, 'Shut up!' It is impossible to carry on a dignified altercation with a gentleman riding on your shoulders, and the efforts of Major Pulfington Belper at this point would have brought the discussion to a termination, for he succeeded in re-

moving the young civilians to a remote part of the verandah ; but unfortunately he had to return for his hat, which was on the ground by the newspaper he had been reading, and as he stooped down to pick it up, his eye and body became suddenly arrested by the word *Babelmandeb*, and all his forgotten duties rushed again upon him. In this attitude by singular mischance he looked so like a school-boy giving a back at leap-frog, that Mr Pelter could not resist the temptation, and flew over him with the words,

‘ Captain Spink, do you ever play “ Fly the Garter ? ” ’

The poor Major’s feelings reached a climax when looking up he beheld a new comer, a short plump gentleman staring at him with a face of surprise.

Mr Palmer Brown of the Bengal Civil Service was in the Secretariat—Indian ears will at once comprehend the significance of the term. He was reputed to be a man of immense official knowledge and power, and the Major, who had known him in former

days when he held a subordinate office at Nawaubgunge, had a great opinion of him now. Certainly Major Pulfington Belper would prefer being detected doing anything unseemly by any one else in India—hardly excepting the Governor-General himself. Mr Palmer Brown frowned upon the young civilians, but oddly enough his manner towards the Major was not at all severe. Haughty to every one else, he was always respectful to the man that no one else was respectful to.

‘Does old Belper know of some murder that this little prig has committed?’ said Mr Chiffney Chaffney. The same wonder had struck him more than once.

When the civilians and the Major had departed, Captain Lemesurier, who was no respecter of persons (at least colonial civilians), discussed past events very freely with Mr Palmer Brown, and that gentleman replied with becoming gravity, but that was nothing to the awe and majesty he assumed when Captain Spink mustered up courage to say to him,—

‘Perhaps it is not quite etiquette to ask about this vacant appointment. I suppose no names are mentioned yet.’

‘Confound these official duffers,’ said Captain Lemesurier, ‘I wish a lot more of them would die of *cholera morbus*. We shouldn’t then hear so much of them!’

The look of Mr Palmer Brown was now inscrutable in the extreme, and there was this reason for it, that having got up late, he was not really aware that any great official was dead of *cholera morbus*.

‘Why, really,’ he said vaguely, ‘it is a little premature, and we public men get the credit for a great deal more knowledge than we really possess’ (meaning ‘we public men don’t,’ &c.). ‘As for the present appointment, Captain Spink will tell you, Captain Lemesurier, that it is by no means an unimportant one—’ The Secretary was curious.

‘No,’ said the Captain of the Body Guard. ‘A Residency, as Mr Palmer Brown can tell you—’

‘Is a post that requires diplomatical and

statesmanlike abilities of a very high order. Its accredited occupant must be a man of great judgment as well as great experience, and in the present case, as Captain Spink can well assure you—' The Secretary was getting still more curious.

'Yes,' said Captain Spink, with a glass in his eye—he was a very short-sighted Cavalry officer,—'the Residency of Nawaubgunge—'

Not many minutes after this Mr Palmer Brown was in his buggy driving like the wind. His departure was so abrupt that I fear he had no time to explain to Captain Lemesurier all the intellectual qualities required by Government 'Residents' at native courts. Nawaubgunge in the market, that was indeed great news !

'Does old Belper know of some murder that this little prig has committed ?'

Here would be a fine opening for a story, but the interest of truth compels me to admit that Major Pulfington Belper does not know of any murder committed by the present powerful and revered Calcutta public man,

whose buggy presently whisks past the Field-officer's palanquin carriage (a fabric in the shape of a box, and constructed chiefly of Venetian blinds and rotten wood), and sets that sentimental Field-officer thinking upon a face—a female face. All through the bustling bazar, and across the broad glaring grass *Maidan*, his thoughts were centred upon the face of a very beautiful woman, the most beautiful he had seen during his long career of exile, of battles, of hardships, of deadening monotonous Indian life—a face he once had loved—and that face does not belong to Miss Julia Wotherspoon, whom for the moment he seems to have quite forgotten.

Back from the past and through the valley of the shade, that face had come, and was before him, in faint outline, once again, reflecting all the changes he had seen upon it in one short year, now haughty with beauty, now luminous with tenderness, now defiant, now pale and worn with sorrow, with regret, perhaps with shame; now calm and beautiful once again, but fixed and rigid.

What had that face to do with Mr Palmer Brown, and why had it come forth from its quiet oblivion, where it and its story were sleeping in a corner of an Indian graveyard? Was it to be allowed still to sleep there, or was it to be brought back into the glare of matter-of-fact Indian life once again, there to produce another story with some of the features of the mother reflected in the offspring?

In the words of a favourite work of the Major's, the Indian drama, the *Sakontala*,

—‘Everywhere around us
Stand the closed portals of events unknown.’

CHAPTER II.

OVERLAND VIA MARSEILLES.

MISS SOPHY BRABAZON TO MISS DORA STAIDLEIGH,
BUDLEIGH SALTERTON, DEVON.

‘ *Steamship Babelmandeb*, Nov. 6th, 18—.

‘ DEAREST DORMOUSE,—

‘ I wrote a long letter in the hotel at Alexandria, and—think how provoking!—I left it in my bed-room there. Since then I have not been able to write *one line*. This place, the saloon, is too noisy for *confidential* communications, and *our* correspondence is of course not to deal with the mere commonplace topics of the Overland journey. Ah, my delightful, sober, grave, dearly beloved Dora, you can have no idea of what I have suffered since I saw you last. You must get on board a big steamer and hurry away into

real *exile* before you understand what the *mal du pays* really means. A little star was just above the horizon over the stern of the vessel for two nights in the Red Sea. I connected this little star somehow with you and *home*, and was ready to cry whenever I watched it. At Southampton when we steamed away, the morning was wet and drizzly, but I loved it all the more for that, it was so thoroughly English. Mr Vesey left me on deck in charge of an old Colonel Dewsnap, who wanted to go below, but I persuaded him to remain, although, to confess it, he was very cross. Such partings! They were quite heart-rending. I can't bear to think of them. As well might I tell you of—the Bay of Biscay. For nearly a week I lived upon *tea*!

‘And yet I seem the most selfish of beings to go on in this way when dear people like Mrs Vesey had so much greater trials to go through. Think of her leaving four children behind her, and Bobby is only three. Poor creature, she is so kind and gentle, and so full of feeling. Everybody that comes

near her ought to be *good*. Mr Vesey is also kind, and, unlike some of the Indians on board, can talk of other things besides Calcutta. Really the greatest drawback to any one *choosing a home* in India is this painful separation from one's family.

‘Apropos, you never talked to me about the *cousin*. I find that the *Dormouse*, though demure, is as sly as any other little mouse! I like Charley Simpkin *very much*! He is a nice boy, and made himself very agreeable. Did he talk of you? You kept back your secrets about him, and so I will pay you off. He is full of fun, and some of his pranks were quite wicked, especially towards old “Colonel Dander,” as they called Colonel Dewsnap. Would you believe it, they sent him a telegram from the Emperor of the French asking after his gout.

‘And now I approach a topic which is *very serious*. You know that there has always been some mystery about my poor cousin Ada's death at Nawaubgunge. I thought the opportunity of going out in

charge of Mrs Vesey favourable, as she died in their house and not in Mr Palmer Brown's, —but would you believe it, Mrs Vesey, very frank on all other topics, avoided the subject when once or twice I approached it. What can be the meaning of this? Did you ever hear that the *ménage* of Ada and her husband was an unhappy one? The subject distresses me very much. I accidentally overheard Mrs Vesey say to her husband, I am sure apropos of me and Ada, “Yes, she is very like, astonishingly like; may she have less trials and less temptations.” You know that her miniature is often taken for mine; indeed, poor papa, and Colonel Brabazon, her father, and my aunt, who married Mr Liversege, to whom I am going in Calcutta, were also all very like. I wish poor dear aunt Liversege was alive now. Well, well, they tell me the present Mrs Liversege is kind.

‘And now, my dearest dearest, I must wish you good-bye! I have no spirits to describe the events of the voyage, which was

funny enough at times. By the way, I might have made one or two *captures* at sea, but I was very *merciful*, and like a kind *pirate* I let them sail on in peace. Also, if I had only time I could tell you such things of the Overland *millinery department*; for though you and I have exalted minds, quite above such *frivolities*, a description of some of the dresses would make you laugh. Farewell! You can't think what a consolation it is to me to communicate with *England* and one I *love*, even by means of a little bit of paper. Love, that misused word, is in its right place for once, in an affection not founded on vanity, selfishness, and the delusions of the *lords of the creation*. The cold sea foams between us, but it cannot part us, my beloved. A hundred farewells, and mind I place exactly one hundred kisses on the top, on the words, "Dearest Dormouse!"

‘Yours,

‘*So, So.*’

MR CHARLES SIMPKIN TO MISS DORA STAIDLEIGH,
BUDLEIGH SALTERTON, DEVON.

' Steamship Babelmandeb, Kedgerree, Nov. 6th, 18—.

' MY DEAR DORA,—

*' Your friend proves all you described her. The day before we reached Gibraltar the sea became smooth, and the weather fine, and a young lady, tallish, with a graceful pretty figure, nicely dressed, and of pleasant carriage, came on deck and created rather a sensation amongst the pursers, and cadets, and mates, and British officers of foot, who were indulging in the pastime of "Ships Quoits." This maiden, like the Shepherdess of the Forest of Arden, was possessed of a cheek of cream, and the extreme whiteness of her skin at the forehead and neck was made more manifest by her dark brown hair. Her eyebrows were nicely pencilled, her nose straight, her lips full, her chin in profile prettily rounded off. Her eyes were at once beautiful, pensive, restless, playful, full of pride, full of *murder*. I happened most fortunately*

to be playing chess with Mr Vesey at the moment she appeared, and she came and sat down by us and worked at a wonderful slipper. This turned out to be Miss Sophy Brabazon. I managed at once to defend my king from the attacks of Mr Vesey's pieces, and to tell her that I knew you, and thus get quickly on tolerably friendly terms with her. I must tell you that the superior skill of Mr Vesey, on this occasion at least, gained him the victory. Yes, your friend is beautiful and accomplished, and as for wit and brilliancy, I, who am a judge, can pass a warm encomium *there* too. Thanks to her friendship for you, I have since seen a great deal of her, in fact I ought to be desperately in love by this time, but I *am not*. She would assume towards me a sort of warm elder-sisterly patronizing manner, which seemed every moment to say—"I hope you spun your top very cleverly this morning!"—"Did you win at marbles?" I observe that it is a feminine weakness to consider moustaches inseparable from manliness, and that no virile

thoughts can lodge in a body five feet six in height, however *graceful* and *well formed* that body may be !

‘ You asked for a minute account of the manners and customs of India. The theme is a wide one. At present three facts have most struck me, judging from the effects of the first hot day upon the Indians on board. The first is, that the sun of India makes people burst out profusely into cheroots, alpaca, and bottled beer. The second, that pocket-handkerchiefs are made to be worn round the hat. The third, that Indian heat quite suffocates all perception of humour. I have been making some very interesting experiments on this point. You know that fun in all its branches has been a favourite study of mine. I selected ten examples of wit, varied in scale from the most delicate innuendo of Sheridan to the broadest Joe Miller, and I proceeded to use them as chemical test-papers on the intellects of a Colonel Dewsnap and a Major Worthington, both which intellects had long been exposed to the deleterious influences of Indian

climate. In the case of the Colonel no sense of the ridiculous was found at all. In the case of the Major faint indications of mirth were obtained at the tenth or Joe-Miller stage. Colonel Dewsnap is a character! He is stumpy, powerful, fierce, abrupt, with a severe military mouth, snowy hair, and a red-hot face, which fizzes on going into cold water. Having said thus much it is unnecessary to add that his legs are further apart at the knees than at the hips and ancles. Also that another *corollary* to such a Colonel is a pair of boots with excessive beam like a walnut-shell boat. What do you think this worthy Field-officer said to us all as soon as we got on board:—"Now, you young griffs, I'm the senior officer on board, and I'll take care that we have no drunkenness or ungentlemanly conduct in this ship." This was quite gratuitous, as neither I nor my friends had exhibited the slightest predilection for ungentlemanly conduct, but at first all this awed us very much. We soon found out, however, that he had not any authority, and you know even the

worm will turn. Our first advances were friendly in the extreme. The first "Champagne day" we all asked him to take wine, many of us three times over. This put him in a thundering passion, as self-command is perhaps the least prominent amongst his many excellent qualities. Our next proceedings were also very respectful. In the streets of Malta directly we saw him coming we all drew up in a line and touched our hats with much deference, and then ran off to meet him again in other streets and repeat the operation. I need not tell our many attentions, which were all taken in bad part. At Alexandria he received a complimentary telegram from the Emperor of the French. This silly Colonel is making me forget Miss Sophy. Is she, or is she not, a bit of a flirt? That is a question which puzzles me. Daly of the Husars (a man of fascinations) gave her some opportunities of indulging in that engaging pastime, but I think on the whole he was unsuccessful, and even the splendid Captain Stubbs of the "*Babelmandeb*" (Captains of

Indian steamers have to pass an examination in three things,—whiskers, navigation, and vocal melody) gave the most tremendous naval orders in the most graceful attitudes, aired the most picturesque of naval coats, told the most mendacious of naval fictions, and sang the most plaintive of our maritime ballads, all—all in vain. I find this perplexing young woman has taken up so much of my letter that I have no room for an account of Malta, Gibraltar, Cairo, the grandest of the grand, or even for the sunsets of the Red Sea, sky and deep bathed in tossing heaving clouds of luminous fire. They say we shall be at Kedgerree, where this is to be posted, in five minutes. Last night we noticed that the blue sea was getting yellower and yellower, and this morning we could scarcely believe we were yet in India. On either side of the vessel was a broad expanse of yellow haze, so dreamy and misty, that but for the finest possible black line it would be almost impossible to tell where the sky ended and where the calm glassy surface of the river began. This line

as the banks neared on each side proved to be low jungle, proved to be India. The steward is calling out—"Any more letters for the Hoverland?" Adieu.

‘Yours, very sincerely,

‘CHARLES SIMPKIN.’

MR CHARLES SIMPKIN TO MISS DORA STADLEIGH,
BUDLEIGH SALTERTON, DEVON.

‘*U. S. Club, Calcutta, Nov. 14th, 18—.*

‘MY DEAR DORA,—

‘Since my last from Kedgerie I find so much to write about. The steamer dashed up the river, passing ships, light-houses, frail native boats with their sails full of holes, groups of mud-huts called native villages, budgerows, villas on beautiful green lawns waving with palms and tamarisks—and at length we saw a flag flying on a rampart. This was Fort William.

‘The *Babelmandeb* ran alongside the steam-packet wharf at Garden Reach, and I was watching Sophy consigned to Mr and Mrs

Liversege, her uncle and aunt, when one of the stewards calling out "That's Hensign Simking!" heralded the apparition of a gentleman dressed something like a game-keeper and something like a baker. His coat was shabby velveteen, and his duck trousers, his thin long hair, his pith hat, and his straggling whiskers, were all coloured light sandy brown. He wore no waistcoat, and had put on, I suppose by mistake, his black neck-tie round his waist. 'Two shrimps' *antennæ* did duty for moustaches, and he addressed me with a dignity evidently modelled on that of the Georgian age, asking after his sister, and telling me that I must come and put up with him in Fort William. This was Miss Belper's brother.

'All the while I was talking to him a crowd of native savages were howling round us as if they wished to tear us to pieces. Major Pulfington Belper spoke a few magical words to these men, and in an instant every article of my luggage was in some man's hands, and all going off, as it seemed, in dif-

ferent directions. These men are called *Coolies*, a delicate allusion no doubt, first, to the lightness of their attire, and, secondly, to the calm self-confidence which enables them to appear in such costume unabashed.

‘I have now to record a very singular circumstance, which says a great deal either for the extreme beauty of Sophy Brabazon, or for the susceptibilities of my new and eccentric friend. We were on our way to the gangway, and had to pass near the companion ladder, and just as we did so, Miss Sophy appeared there, having been down to her cabin. My new friend has a habit of looking at his boots as he walks along, perhaps because those boots are of eccentric pattern, thus it happened that he did not see her until he nearly ran up against her. You should have seen his wonderful look when first confronted with her dazzling charms. Positively he started back three paces, cannoning against a stalwart British seaman with a huge trunk on his head, and then tumbling backwards into a large tin basket of dirty crockery which one of the

stewards had accidentally left there. Fancy a very nice-mannered elderly gentleman, with his heels high up in the air, looking at you with the most bewildered of looks, through his spectacles and from the bottom of a case of smashed crockery, and you have the scene.

‘Ensign Simpkin now placed his foot on the soil of Hindustan, as they say in Indian newspapers, and the Major, after looking for his carriage and failing to find it, said, to the Ensign’s great joy, that we should each go in a *palkee*, which mode of carriage, by-the-by, is known by the name of *palanquin* in the British isles, for some reasons best known to those eccentric islanders. The Major proceeded to hail a couple, or rather a couple of dozen, for at least that number surrounded us, each having four carriers, all of whom sang out together in chorus, that form of singing being apparently the best suited to the Indian voice. The Major again lulled the storm by a few magic words. If all we read of India be true, I fear that these, from their instantaneous effect, must have been terms of

gross abuse. I now tried to get into my palkee (not palanquin), but this is not easy at first. You have to roll yourself into a ball and throw yourself in at the window. And when I did get in I found I had got in the wrong way, and my head was resting against the brass handles of a drawer for a pillow. The bearers run you along at a surprising pace, chanting "*Foo! Foo!*" or words to that effect. We passed a *bazar*, a real, dusty, frugal, mean, Indian *bazar*, with its little shops for the retail of parched peas, its nude infants, its black men scantily clothed in whity-brown cotton. We saw real carts of primeval pattern, drawn by oxen; real Indian cabs, the *ekka*, with its little cotton canopy and red cushion; real Indian women, with their *Sarees* and *Chuddahs*, and with one arm and both legs bangled and bare; real Brahmins with their yellow streaks, and mendicants with their ashes and loam; real little Indian red-brick houses, with mats in front propped up on bamboos, under which white-bearded traders cast up their accounts in

huge red books with the flimsiest of leaves. I saw a little Hindoo temple with pyramidical dome, where plantains and rice and sugar are still offered up to the goddess *Kalee* (the most cruel goddess is always the most popular, as you well know, young lady!). I saw a black policeman with an Indian sabre. I saw some smart Mussulmans with their white muslin turbans and graceful drapery. Strong aromatic Indian smells overpowered the senses, and above us glared a tropical sun. It was indeed India.

‘The Major’s quarters in the Fort were two bare unfurnished rooms. His furniture seemed to consist chiefly of guns. Two tin boxes, a bed, an arm-chair with only one arm, a brass basin, a billiard cue hung up to straighten, and two empty beer bottles, completed the decoration of the apartment. We breakfasted next door with a Mr Curzon of his regiment, off fish, rice, and eggs—the favourite Indian breakfast. All through this repast, and indeed at all other times, the Major talked incessantly a curious *patois*, half Hin-

dustan, half English. On returning to his quarters he suddenly broke out into immense joy at the sight of a huge brown-paper parcel.

“‘I’ll order a buggy,’ he called out, ‘I’ll drive you everywhere—to the Town Major’s to report yourself, to the great beauty, Miss Wotherspoon, a bewitching *peri*,—you know that word! In England they pronounce it as if it rhymed to ‘deary,’ but the Persian word rhymes to ‘flurry’ and ‘worry;’ the rhyme, you know, is often an echo to the sense. We’ll drive to the club to hear the *gup*. I forgot, you don’t know Hindustan, hey? ‘Well and how do you like India, hey? By-the-by, Simpkin, tell me—I did really see a very pretty girl on board the steamer—did I not?’”

‘The Major’s change of voice and manner here would have been eccentric in anybody else.

“‘Of course you did, Major, what do you mean?’”

“‘The young lady at the top of the companion ladder!’”

“Of course ; why, was she not pretty enough to please you ? ”

“Well, I don’t know, I almost thought—what was her name ? ”

“Sophy Brabazon ! ”

“Brabazon ! ” said the Major in a peculiar manner, and the subject dropt.

‘The brown-paper parcel contained a new suit of clothes, designed out of the Major’s own head,—a frock-coat buttoned up to the chin, with waist buttons in the small of the back, a pair of grey trousers, and a yellowish waistcoat. He soon appeared in them, and had apparently discovered his mistake about the neck-tie, for it was now wound several times round his neck. Over the Fort draw-bridges, and along the river, where the tall Indiamen were moored, and then across a huge grass plain, to wide streets of huge white houses, each in its garden, went our cabriolet with a native groom hooked up somewhere under the wheels, screaming incessantly in the most piercing of voices, and thus saving many human lives, for the Major,

despite his spectacles, was very blind and reckless, and the black pedestrians exhibited the proverbial Eastern contempt of life by constantly getting under the horse's head, as if they mistook the Major in his new clothes for the Jehu of the car of Juggernaut. We reached the Club, and a number of young gentlemen in shirt-sleeves appeared at once at the door of one of the rooms, and persuaded the Major to enter and play one game of billiards, and then another, and presently he forgot all about the Town Major and the great beauty. He bantered cheerfully when he was winning, and dismally when he was losing, and his friends smoked, and drank beer, and brandy and water. By-and-by dandies came home from their visits, and fagged officials from their work, and they talked about vacant appointments and official salaries. At sunset they drove on the esplanade, and then they dined—prim in their fine equipages, and dismal over their champagne. That night I knew India.

‘Yours, &c., CHARLES SIMPKIN.’

CHAPTER III.

BRAHMINS.

MISS SOPHY BRABAZON TO MISS DORA STAIDLEIGH,
BUDLEIGH SALTERTON, DEVON.

‘Chowringhee, Nov. 20th, 18—.

‘DEAREST DORMOUSE,—

‘I feel very lonely and unhappy. My uncle Liversege and my aunt came to fetch me on the steamer, the first an absent dreamy man, very yellow in the face.

“Here’s your uncle,” said the lady, who was very pompous.

“Oh, this is Sophy!” he said, and gave me a kiss, seeming all the while chiefly intent upon avoiding the sailors who were carrying boxes about.

“By-the-by, what time did you arrive at Fultah ghaut?” he said after a pause.

‘I replied, that I thought we passed a place of similar sound at six o’clock.

“‘I told you so, Maria, my love. Didn’t I say so last night? Wasn’t I right?’”

“‘I’m sure, my dear, I scarcely recollect,’” said the lady, tartly.

“‘I said, if they get to Kedgerree before three or half-past three, they’ll have water enough to go over the ‘James and Mary,’ and then I shouldn’t be surprised if they reached Fultah ghaut by six. Hulloo, there’s Lushington. Didn’t I say they’d reach Fultah ghaut by six?’” and as my uncle and aunt now entered into an animated conversation with Mr Lushington, you see the only words spoken to me directly by my uncle were these :

““Oh, this is Sophy! By-the-by, what time did you reach Fultah ghaut?’”

‘We got into a barouche at the quay. Two black servants bowed to the earth as we entered it, and a patriarch with a long white beard drove the grey Arabs to Mr Liversege’s house in *Chowringhee*, the most fashionable quarter of Calcutta.

‘I have not spirits to describe a palace in this *city of palaces*. Imagine a huge square block of a building imposing from its size and height, but with white stucco walls somewhat mouldy from the effects of the last *monsoon*. It stands in a small garden filled partly with lovely tropical flowers and shrubs, and partly with a confused jumble of mean little out-houses for the natives. A crowd of slaves kissed the earth as we entered, and at the first landing were some more black servants seated cross-legged and working at my aunt’s dresses and petticoats in the open day. They are called *durzies*, or tailors. Indeed there is a queer mixture of the pretentious and the homely in the palace generally.

‘The furniture of the drawing-room was showy and expensive, a mass of glitter, but barely sufficient for the size of the room. This latter was very high, much too high for its size, though it was very large. It had five windows and eight doors, the doorways being also unusually high, and of singular construction for the sake of coolness. A framework

spread with red silk opens and shuts, but is only half the size of the doorway, leaving a gap above and below, and through one doorway the leg of a bedstead was plainly visible. On the wall are branches with huge bell-mouthed lamp-glasses. The walls are of bare whitewash somewhat discoloured. There is no ceiling, and the rafters above are exposed with no other disguise than a coat of green paint. I should say the first impression derived from an Indian drawing-room is, one of *mildewy magnificence* !

‘ My uncle had to go off to his office that morning, and he remained away all day. I tried once or twice to get into conversation with Mrs Liversege, but she was very cross. At dinner a number of high officials came, and they were *most pompous* and dull. This was the sole topic of conversation. A Colonel Dowling has died at Nawaubgunge (the place, you know, where Ada also died), and there is a perfect fever of excitement about his successor in the lucrative post of Resident. That you may be quite *au fait* on the subject of

this important political question, I must tell you that it is believed the Governor-General will be swayed in his choice by one of two rival Calcutta magnates—Mr Windus, the Lieut.-Governor of the Sunderbunds, or Mr Prettijohn, the principal Pundit of the Governor-General's *Pundit Khana*. Indian names are so funny. Fancy, this is the only topic I have heard discussed since I have been in India. I believe my aunt is scheming to get the appointment for my uncle through Mr Windus.

‘Oh, how sick at heart I felt when I got to my bed-room that night. Everything here seems so grand, so formal, so unfriendly. My bed-room is enormous and almost unfurnished. It is lit by one feeble wick, floating in a tumbler-full of cocoa-nut oil, on a little straw stool. A huge bed is in the middle, with a huge scaffolding for the gauzy mosquito curtains. A coarse mat covers a fourth of the floor, and the rest is of clay and plaster smoothed and dried. Two black female servants bustled about, and watched my every movement with

their large eyes. When they had gone I thought of the large cargo of human beings which had that day been landed in India; of Mrs Vesey and the other mothers who cry in vain towards the shores where their little ones are praying for them; of boys and young girls who have said "Good-bye" to their parents for ever; and I own I was weak enough to indulge in a hearty cry. Be sure that the dear fields of Old England never look so green as when seen across a desolate waste of weary ocean.

‘ Who do you think is one of the most influential of Calcutta officials in the grave crisis I just told you of?—Mr Palmer Brown, Ada’s widower. He is not very good-looking, indeed, much too large in the waist. But he is *agreeable*. The whole affair of my cousin is still shrouded in mystery. I spoke to my aunt, but she was cross upon the subject, and my uncle seems to avoid talking about it. He is kind under his formality. Mr Palmer Brown cannot have been to blame, else why should poor Ada’s relations be so intimate with him? My

aunt has the greatest opinion of him, and wants his interest, which is great, in the matter of this tiresome Residency of Nawaubgunge. Since writing this, much has happened, which I must defer to another mail.

‘ Your dearest,

‘ *So, So.*’

MR CHARLES SIMPKIN TO MISS DORA STAIDLEIGH,
BUDLEIGH SALTERTON, DEVON.

‘ *U. S. Club, Nov. 24th, 18—.*

‘ MY DEAR DORA,

‘ Calcutta is an atrocious place. A Despotism tempered with Cholera morbus. Society is dull, formal, in the hands of *Brahmins*, a sacred class who discourage pleasure. I long to join my regiment. I have applied for the 44th Nowgong Native Infantry (Belper’s regiment), and I hope soon to be posted. I have scarcely seen Sophy. The Brahmins look down upon the military class of the community, and when I call at the house I am told the doors are shut, though yesterday

I saw them open a minute afterwards to a civilian, with the orthodox yellow streak. My humorous friend, Major Pulfington Belper, tells me that by the old Hindoo law if a *Chatriya* (soldier caste) gained the affections of a Brahmin lady he was burnt to death on an iron bed. The same spirit seems to animate the Brahmins of the Bengal Civil Service to the present day.

‘I admit that last night I had the great honour of dining with Mrs Liversege. As I got my invitation verbally half an hour before the dinner-gong sounded, it might have been to fill up a gap. The guests were of such high rank that when I mentioned their names afterwards to Major Pulfington Belper, he looked through the spectacles of reverence with the eyes of wonder. I was honoured by three words from Mrs Liversege, a short, stout, ponderous lady, slow in movement—and (if such an expression can be used towards a person of such high rank) a little inclined to a *waddle* in her walk. In conversation with strangers she rather intones than speaks, making great play

with her right hand, which is small and plump. Imagine the first Napoleon in dove-coloured satin with plenty of lace, flounces, chains, and bracelets, and you have some idea of Mrs Liversege, but her nose is of that beaky curve peculiar to Wellingtons, eagles, and very mercenary mammas. Her husband is tall, lean, and as yellow as the conventional nabob of old plays and novels. He is a painstaking, dull, pompous, statistical person, who reads Indian blue books for relaxation, and has no thought beyond the Civil administration of the East India Company. Sophy was engaged in conversation with a colonel. The only other person whom I knew in the room was a fat little official who cordially shook by the hand the Member of Council to the right of me and the *Sudder* judge to the left of me, and vouchsafed to me a nod, which indicated at least as much of the friend as the patron. My companions in the doorway were talking a mixture of Hindustanee and English upon the great question of the day. Who is to get the Residency of Nawaubgunge? Mr Curry? Mr

Lushington ? Mr Blogg ? Mr Wotherspoon ? or Mr Liversege ? I have heard of nothing else since I have been in Calcutta.

‘ But dinner (that grave Brahminical ceremony) is now announced, and we march down in the order prescribed by the Institutes of Menu. I bring up the rear, and find, to my horror, that the only vacant seat is between Col. Boshington of the Army Routine Department and the wife of a member of Council. By the time I have mustered up sufficient moral courage to take my place they are both luckily too busy with the mullagatawny to notice me. But now my difficulties begin. I find it is amongst the manners and customs of India that every one should bring his own black table-servant, and this servant will wait on nobody else. From ignorance I have neglected this custom, and now I feel the results. Near me stands a black man. He wears the picturesque flowing garments of the East, but turban and robe have a binding of red—mark, red *tape* ! On the turban likewise a crest is emblazoned. In bad Hindustanee I give the

man an order, which he totally ignores. I find that this man wears the livery of Col. Boshington, that the crest, a sword intertwined with something (probably a piece of *red tape*), is the crest of Col. Boshington, and that the good native is in every way a worthy satellite of that impracticable time-stranded establishment, the Department of Army Routine. By-and-by the excellent Mr Liversege at a remote end of the table guesses my difficulty, and detaches to my rescue a most benevolent native, with long white robes and a long white beard, like the picture of the Patriarch Laban in the National Collection. The benevolent Laban saves me from death by starvation, and plies me with *Moët*, and Kabobs, with mullagatawny and pillau.

‘In England you may address, without presumption, a common-place remark to a gentleman sitting next you at dinner. When I had drunk two glasses of champagne, I accosted my neighbour, artfully selecting a topic which I fancied would be of interest to him.

“Have you read, sir, the article in to-day’s *Hurkaru* about the Residency of Nawaubgunge?”

“Eh, eh? What, sir?” was the reply. I repeated my question.

“Have I read the article in to-day’s *Hurkaru* about the Residency of Nawaubgunge?” he said very deliberately and solemnly. “Is that your question?”

“Yes, that was it!”

“Yes, I have read the article in to-day’s *Hurkaru* about the Residency of Nawaubgunge!” he replied, thus intimating that though there was nothing unprecedented in a person of his rank reading the article in question, there might be in a person of mine broaching so tremendous a subject. The fact is, it was not until the next morning (after an interview with Major Pulfington Belper, who was aghast at my boldness!) that I knew what a tremendous personage the fat officer really was. He is more looked up to than even His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, and is so conscientious a routinist that he has

his collars, which are unfashionably large, starched with pipe-clay.

‘ In the drawing-room I found Sophy occupied with a stout admirer, whose conversation was so brilliant and engaging that she would not listen to a word *I* said. I cannot give him higher eulogy than that! She is already immensely admired, and has cut out another great beauty, Miss Wotherspoon. Beauties and civil appointments are the two great topics of Indian conversation.

‘ Oh, would that I were a pious Brahmin, with a yellow streak down the centre of my forehead. I would count my beads all day under the shade of the *Neem* tree. I would turn over the banana leaves of my sacred volume. I would cry “*Ram ! Ram !*” and cover my head with dust and clay. Men would *salam* to me, and beautiful maids, with large eyes, and tiny little naked feet peeping out from under their little *chuddahs*, would come and bow reverentially and bring me offerings, and fatten me with clarified butter and rice and milk.

‘ One such *Gooroo* have I seen, oily and especially well fattened, and his name is Palmer Brown, B. C. S. “ *Ram ! Ram !* ” Woe ! Woe !

‘ Yours, &c.,

‘ CHARLES SIMPKIN.’

MISS SOPHY BRABAZON TO MISS DORA STAIDLEIGH,
BUDLEIGH SALTERTON, DEVON.

‘ *Chowringhee, December 5th, 18—.*

‘ DEAREST DORMOUSE,—

‘ I like Calcutta much better. My aunt becomes much kinder. And we have had an addition to our house. Mrs Throgmorton, sister to Mrs Liversege, and her daughter *Motee* (pearl). *Motee* has a little *native blood* in her, but she is a dear girl, very kind and unselfish. Mrs Throgmorton is *serious*, and brings up upon all occasions the opinions and tracts of a favourite clergyman, the Reverend Eli Petticrook of Cheltenham. These are chiefly levelled against dancing, dress, play-

going, and other *young ladies' amusements* and follies, and she and Mrs Liversege had a great argument the other day about my going to the Governor-General's ball at Barrackpore. Mrs Throgmorton was against it, and produced a copy of "Round and Round! or the Moth and the Flame!" by the Reverend Eli Petticrook, but Mrs Liversege replied that if Mr Windus and Colonel Boshington, who are both *serious*, saw no harm in going, she should certainly let me go.

'And now that I have recovered my spirits a little I intend to be as garrulous, as *bavarde*, as wicked, and I hope as lively as your giddy little friend used to be in England. You and I have agreed, you know, to have no secrets the one from the other, but you must remember that the conditions were perfect frankness on *both* sides. You are to be my father confessor, and I am sure I shall have a long list of *peccadilloes* to answer for, but if you want any shrift from me you must be equally confiding in return. Do you know, I very much doubt your telling me

everything. Nobody has ever got to the bottom of your secrets, demure little puss !

‘ *Commençons !* Official intrigues, official dinners, and official flirtations, are the three amusements of Calcutta, and I have chiefly cultivated the latter pastime. I have been most wicked and most successful. I have already taken captive two brave warriors, Captain Lemesurier, a *handsome* Aide-de-camp (to the Governor-General), and Captain Spink of the Body-Guard. The latter copies the former in every respect. Both are much admired by some girls, but my aunt tells me that to be a soldier’s wife is considered *mauvais genre* out here, so I think I shall be magnanimous and put the poor little trout back again into the water. People out here are so funny ; my aunt speaks quite seriously on the subject, and Charley Simpkin says that some mammas have a scale modelled on the droll scale of dinner-precedence, which sets forth that a judge’s daughter may marry nothing under a collector or a Major-General with a cork leg, a collector’s daughter nothing

under a magistrate, or a full Colonel (if invested with the order of the Bath), and so on, just like the rules my aunt consults before arranging how people are to go down to dinner.

‘Of civilians I have captured a *shoal*. The great beauty of Calcutta is a Miss Wotherspoon, who tried to *patronize* me with much kindness the first dinner-party I went to. She did rather *eclipse* me in a millinery point of view. Her dress was a gauze dress, *bouton d’or*, trimmed with black lace and rich red roses. Very pretty! I am candid. I *think* I shall have my turn at the Barrack-pore ball. Mine is to be a rich white glacé silk, with innumerable bouillons of tulle, and an upper skirt of tulle looped up at intervals with marabout feathers, and small pink rose-buds. Won’t that be *heavenly*? I think—but I was going to tell you of these civilians. They used to follow Miss Wotherspoon, and now they follow *some one else*. They are nice merry young boys, with a weakness for buying buggies and horses. One, Mr Chiffney Chaff-

ney, is considered a great wit. They are always together, even in love.

‘Another deserter from Miss Wother-spoon’s colours is (according to Charley Simpkin) a very funny man, Miss Belper’s brother, who drives on the Calcutta course with Charley in a hack buggy, and tries to look dignified, with a broken buggy whip in his hand. He quotes Byron and “Bendemeer’s Stream,” has a certain air of dignity about him, and shows his emotion, according to Master Charley, by getting very red in the nose. He makes set speeches which he invents before-hand, and which are generally *mal placé*,—as yesterday, when we were talking about this eternal Nawaubgunge, he suddenly broke out :

“ Well, Miss Brabazon, you see, beauties in India are like the statues of Mercury, they have the whole world at their feet—Hey !”

‘Charley Simpkin is a little put out about something—these young gentlemen are so irritable. You know he writes really beautiful poetry, and was to write some for my album.

He finished a poem "The Holy River," and brought it at the very moment that Mr Palmer Brown came also to call. Something offended him, and I have not seen him since. His poem is beautiful ; and, though he hates "Moore," whom I like immensely (and so I told him), his own style seems not unlike.

" Love launches her lamp when dim terrors are near,
And the swift gloom of night comes o'er eve's
rosy beam,
And the lonely one watches its twinkle in fear,
Love's star mid the glimmering stars in the stream.

" Flow on, fatal river, chill, gloomy, and vast,
And bear on thy calmness that lamp's feeble glow,
Or bear the drown'd hope that seeks in thee at last,
With faith not all pagan, a rest from its woe."

'Is not this a little like the very "Bendemeer's Stream" he quizzes Major Pulfington Belper for quoting? I admire poetry, and so does Mr Palmer Brown.

'This gentleman is a curious compound.

'He is active, energetic, a man of the world, with very great ability indeed, and he is also a lady's man, nicely dressed, and all

that. I think that he is a *genuine* man, strong, conscientious, and fond of truth, quite like a hero of Kingsley, only fatter. The mystery about his poor wife still perplexes me very much, but I feel convinced from what I see of Mr Palmer Brown, that he could not have been to blame. A man like him must always be true to himself.

‘Your dearest

‘*So, So.*’

CHAPTER IV.

THE MOTH AND THE FLAME.

MR CHARLES SIMPKIN TO MISS DORA STAIDLEIGH,
BUDLEIGH SALTERTON, DEVON.

‘Barrackpore, Nov. 29th, 18—.

‘DEAR DORA,—

‘Think of this. The present letter is written in a “bungalow!” Ensign Simpkin having reported his arrival at head-quarters, will attend drill under the Adjutant every morning at five o’clock. For further particulars—*vide* Regimental Order Book. Monday I put on my shell jacket and came down in a buggy from Cooke’s to report my arrival. The Adjutant, Mr Wrottesley, carried me off to the quarters of Lieut.-Col. Sandboy, who cannot be a very intelligent officer, as all that seemed to attract him in my somewhat

striking figure and general appearance were a few paltry minutiae connected with buttons and shoulder cords, which he said would have to be altered.

‘ That night I dined at “ Our Mess ! ” with a lot of my brother officers in red shell jackets, worn open, and white waistcoats. A real live Sepoy, in a real English uniform, Scotch cap, and a necklace of white shells instead of a stock, carried arms to me as I walked in. I received this mark of attention with a gracious urbanity, as if I had been accustomed to this sort of thing all my life. I hated Calcutta, and longed for the active duties of my profession, and these I find to consist in going out at the chilliest hour of the night, an hour or so before dawn, and standing in very wet grass, in a thick mist, and there performing all sorts of absurd acrobatic exercises for the edification of a native *Naick*, or corporal. Well, well, I suppose great Clive one day went through the balance step not gaining ground, under equally unfavourable circumstances.

‘ You asked me to give you my real opinion of the officers of my regiment. Shall I confess it,—my first impression is one of considerable disappointment. But their shortcomings do not lie at all in the direction which, from a perusal of Anglo-Indian literature, I had been led to expect. If you remember, the late Sir Charles Napier could never wholly divest himself of the idea that the officers of the Bengal army had champagne for *tiffin* every day ; and another gifted officer, Professor Oakfield, wrote what ought perhaps to be called a grave theological lampoon, which left on the mind of the reader the impression that it was necessary always when dining at an Indian mess to keep a bottle of sherry near at hand, for the purpose of avenging ribald insult. I confess I did look forward to one of these demoralizing but pleasant tiffin parties, but I was quite disappointed. My brother officers seem to be dull, plodding, business-like and respectable to a fault, that is, the old ones, and all except griffs we call old. They don’t seem to have

a thought beyond drill and buying out their seniors. The conversation at mess the first night related almost entirely to this question. Major Tomkinson of the regiment had agreed to retire if his brother officers would give him 3200 rupees. Now this was the point in debate. Ought they to produce the 3200 rupees, and get rid of Major Tomkinson, or ought they to unbendingly adhere to the regimental scale which held out only 3000 rupees to a retiring Major? I am forgetting, there was another question much debated, and it was this. Suppose a corporal's guard of four men, say of the 16th Regiment, were to meet a sergeant's guard of eight men of a junior regiment, say the 17th, which would have the *pas* of the other? Three general orders were cited, one of 1819, which decided in favour of the corporal's guard, one of 1826, which decided in favour of the sergeant's, and one of 1841, which, owing to its erroneous grammatical construction, decided in favour of both. It was at last fixed that the Tomkinson question and the sergeant's guard question, should

stand over until the arrival at head-quarters of a Captain Ashleigh, who had been left by Major Pulfington Belper with his company at Shikarpore. Captain Ashleigh, it appears, is a great authority on these and similar stupendous questions. Thus you see the conversation at mess, unless the Hindustanee element contains some unfathomed vivacity—if not cheerful is entirely innocent. The only circumstance that awakens the least sprightliness is a mistake on the part of one of the younger officers—either in Hindustani or Indian usage. I am thankful to say that I was able to create a laugh on the very first night. I wanted a cheroot light, and called out *Butty!* Don't you see the fun! *Butty!* means a waxlight, not a cheroot light.

‘ My friend Major Pulfington Belper is still in Calcutta, but will be back in time for the ball. They say the mess will be funnier when he comes, as he has been the butt of it for thirty years. His remarkable game of billiards also generally attracts all the other billiard players in the cantonments. I am

forgetting another friend I have found here, Brigadier Dewsnap. This officer has already made himself very unpopular in his brigade command, by administering sharp reproofs and rude insults to almost every individual officer serving under him. I did myself the pleasure to call on him in company with the adjutant. "What's this?" he said, addressing that officer. "How dares that young man appear before an officer commanding a brigade for the first time" (meaning, "appear for the first time before an officer, &c.") "without putting on full dress? Tell that young officer that I have seen him before, and that I have my eye upon him. Tell him also that if he thinks he can be insubordinate in this command, he is very much mistaken."

"The adjutant here explained, that having just been posted I had no time to have full dress made up.

"Then take that young officer away to his quarters, and let him remain, hid, concealed, *perdu* (accent on *du*), till he has got

uniform fit to appear in before his senior officers. Carry him off, sir. And when he is fit to appear, let Colonel Sandboy write officially to the Brigade Major, and I will appoint the hour when he is to be brought up and presented to me. He is at present to consider himself unrepresented, unrepresentable. March him off!’’’

‘This was too late for last mail, and I open it again to say that the great authority on the Tomkinson question has arrived, and the question was discussed all last night at mess. Fancy, I have the distinguished honour of chumming with Captain Ashleigh, a curt gentleman with a *hatchetty* face, and a complexion something like a Red Indian’s. He is a dead shot, and very partial to the chase. He is said also to dislike ladies’ society (at least four captains of the regiment are as timid as fawns, and would rather charge three batteries than speak to one lady), so you can well imagine my friend to be a blank unintelligent person, who studies general orders, is curious about the particular action of pipe-clay on

pouch belts, and calls "arrangement" *Bundobust*, though the former word is recommended in preference by Dr Johnson. Captain Ashleigh is thin, wiry, active, and knows more about the drill book and general orders than anybody in the regiment. He is slightly bald, with a big drooping light-brown moustache, so big, in fact, that his nose is obliged to form itself into a hook to hold it on. Moustaches are humbugs, I don't believe in them. A mere bunch of hair sprouting out on the upper lip gives this driest of Indian officers, this self-consuming cigar, this clockwork warrior, this automaton mover of Indian chessmen, a thoughtful, sentimental look at times. I have only lived two days with him in the same bungalow. His most objectionable characteristic seems a habit of cross-examining you in a manner partly Socratic, and partly like Mr Ballantyne at the Old Bailey.

‘Yours, &c.,

‘CHARLES SIMPKIN.’

From this letter it is to be seen that Charley Simpkin's duties have fairly commenced. He is an Indian soldier, and has to conquer his three first foes—his drill-sergeant, his bearer, and his pony. His arduous struggles with the first of these have been already noticed. In exchange for Hookum Sirdar, a servant who carried off all his rupees, he has now an 'up-country' bearer, one that has lived all his life with an officer of a native regiment, and these are the best bearers in India. With this particular servant he soon gets on very well, as a good native servant is the most plastic of characters, who discovers all your ways by instinct, and does all you want almost as soon as you can form the wish. By the aid of a dictionary, and a volume of Hindustanee dialogues, he explains to him that he does not want his patent-leather boots cleaned with blacking, or the gilt ornaments of his sword cleaned away with sand-paper. Ram Buccus is a Hindn, aged thirty-five, lightly, but strongly built, with a large nose, and a dark brown skin scarred with the small pox. He

wears a red turban, a short quilted jacket, called a *mirzaie*, which is blue, bound with red piping. His *dhotee*, the ample cloth which Hindus fold about their loins, is of a cinnamon hue. Owing to a slight nervous affection about the eyes he received at once from his vivacious master the nickname of the 'Blinking Idolater,' and this name he retained for many a year. In addition to this servant, Mr Charles Simpkin is now supplied with more than half-a-dozen others, as no man in Bengal will do more than one duty. He has a white-turbaned and white-robed Mussulman, Kabob Malik, for his Khitmutgar, and chef de cuisine. He has a syce and grass fetcher, a washerman, a water-carrier, and a Chowkeydar. The 'Blinking Idolater' is the head man of this large establishment, and proudly dangles his master's keys at his waist.

Charley's pony, or *tat*, or *tattoo* (for all three of these names are used in India), was purchased from a brother officer, Ensign Hodges, for the sum of 150 Rs. 'Tippoo,' a pink-nosed, white, diminutive Arab, has a trick of

throwing down his head and breaking off into a gallop, when he passes within one hundred yards of the Mess—and this said gallop no power on earth can arrest, until the head-strong little animal stops of his own accord under the Mess portico.

Barrackpore has much in common with all other Indian cantonments. A native regiment has its lines of mud-huts where the Sepoys live, in front of which is the parade ground, and in rear run three lines of bungalows for the English officers, the rear line being nominally devoted to officers of superior rank. As each house stands detached in a garden of its own, the cantonments generally cover a large space of ground. Government House stands in a large park, the finest in India. There the band plays every evening and attracts the English residents, who sit quietly in their carriages by the calm Hooghly and devour what little air there is in the hot nights of summer, watching languidly the glorious glow of an Indian sunset, and the distant white villas of Serampore which peep

through the palms and bamboos on the opposite bank. In one part of the park is a menagerie and an aviary. Charley Simpkin galloped in the park morning and evening, and enjoyed the fine turf and noble trees, and the luxury of his sentimental woe ; and was amused and diverted with his new life—more perhaps than he liked to confess.

The bungalow in which the young gentleman was now living in company with Capt. Ashleigh was in the centre or Captains' lines. A bungalow is a one-storied house with a high roof sloping up into almost a point, and coming down very low to form the over-hanging verandah. In Barrackpore the roofs were of tiles, but in most stations in Bengal they are of thatch, which is considered cooler. Capt. Ashleigh's bungalow had two large sitting-rooms in the centre, and on each side was a bed-room and a bath-room. Bathing is the principal religious ceremony in Hindustan. Charley Simpkin had an adventure in his bath-room two days after he took up his abode in the bungalow. Half-a-dozen large red spheri-

cal earthen jars are ranged around, and it is the habit of Khitmutgars to place a bottle or two of soda water—of which there is a very free consumption in the East—in one of these jars to cool. Ignorant of this habit, Charley Simpkin one morning capsized the red jar high over his head. Suddenly he felt a thump! thump! and in an instant he was in a cooling stream of effervescence and broken glass. It was well for the pious Musulman Kabob Malik that he was away at the moment when the young man's wrath was at the highest.

It was at his first interview with Captain Ashleigh that Ensign Charles Simpkin detected the cross-questioning habit of the Captain—which so much offended his young dignity. He had taken possession of the bungalow before the arrival of Captain Ashleigh at Barrackpore, and rushing into it one morning from the Mess he found the *Compound* full of Sepoys in the rifle uniform, and in the principal room was a *Soobahdar* seated in an arm-chair, three Sepoys standing in line, and an

English officer, in a flannel shirt, and the trousers of the rifle company of the regiment, writing away at the table, and puffing clouds of smoke from a Manilla cheroot between his teeth.

‘Oh, you’re Mr Simpkin,’ said the officer, shaking hands with him as soon as he perceived him. ‘Take a seat, I shall have done in a moment. Soobahdar Sahib, this is the new Sahib of the regiment.’ This was said in Hindustanee, and the grave old Soobahdar stood up and saluted. Charley Simpkin returned the salute, but could think of no more appropriate Hindustanee remark to make than—

‘*Ha ! bahu acchat !*’—(Yes, very excellent !)

Captain Ashleigh went on writing, now saying a word or two to the Soobahdar, and now a word to the Ensign.

‘You have been here three weeks, I think?’

‘Three weeks to-day !’

‘You are fond of Calcutta?’

‘I can’t say that I am.’

‘You go there pretty often?’

‘ Well, I do sometimes.’

‘ Excuse my putting one question: the expenses at joining are a little heavy for a young man, the various entrance subscriptions,—did your friends think of that when they left England, and make you an allowance for it?’

‘ I have just enough to pay for my uniforms, for nothing else.’

Captain Ashleigh took a very long puff at his cheroot, and went on writing. That copious puff of smoke aggravated Mr Charles. A dozen sermons seemed conveyed in that small volume of smoke. The young gentleman knew that he had a number of regimental debts unsettled, and that it was expensive to go to Calcutta often, but he did not like the two facts brought too close together in friendly conversation.

It was some time before Captain Ashleigh again addressed him.

‘ Do you like Barrackpore?’

‘ Very moderately!’

‘ You have found some friends already?’

‘ Yes, I go about with Short, and Smart, and Griffinhoof, and Hodges.’

‘ The latter sold you a pony ?’

‘ Yes.’

‘ One hundred and twenty Rupees ?’

‘ Yes.’

Another long puff of smoke, and a pause. Charley could not positively swear that this meant ‘ How you have been done !’ But he knew he had been, and that made him sensitive. A self-satisfied young gentleman, somewhat proud of his word-fencing, he felt if many more puffs of smoke came he must take up the foils.

‘ I suppose you don’t like drill !’

‘ Well, there are some pleasures in this life to which I give a preference, I confess : a flirtation with the girl of your heart, a game of cricket at Rugby, a champagne tiffin (Napier pattern) on the plains of Bengal, which is further enlivened by the sprightly conversation of the officers of the Bengal Army.’

‘ You have studied Sir Charles Napier’s remarks ?’

‘I thought you gentlemen all despised him as a charlatan.’

‘Well, he had his faults. But he had genius, and he detected and parried the greatest stroke that has yet been struck at the English power in India. Little men love to point out little inconsistencies, and as there was a period of his life when he did *not* see what threatened India, that is easy enough. Men like Henry Lawrence see a great danger still, and perhaps one day we shall all be sorry that we have not a Napier to command us.’

‘It was about an alleged general mutiny of Sepoys, was it not? The Governor-General did not believe in it, and ousted Sir Charles.’

‘That is about the long and short of it.’

‘Don’t you believe in the faithful Sepoy?’

‘Jack Pandy is a man!’

‘Jack Pandy! who is Jack Pandy?’

‘Jack Pandy is before you!’ and Captain Ashleigh glanced at the three Sepoys who were still standing at the position of attention.

Ensign Charles Simpkin was indeed face to face with that celebrated character, Jack

Pandy. There he stood in his picturesque undress, with his skull-cap, necklace of shells, linen jacket, ample *dhotee*, bare legs, and Indian shoes,—a muscular, enduring, wiry, lanky warrior; common-place in the eyes of the Ensign in this particular year, but by no means so to us, now that Company's Officer and Company's Sepoy have become things of the past; together with that fat, civic, turtle-soup-consuming, just, slow, energetic Mr John Company, the first Colonist, the best Captain of Mercenaries, and the best pay-master the world has seen.

Treachery, cowardice, and the gallows had so much to do with poor Jack Sepoy's inglorious end, that it is scarcely possible to draw him fairly just now; and yet he held India for a hundred years, taking his share in every victory, from Plassey to the defence of Lucknow. Many of his detractors are scarcely aware that he crossed bayonets with the French, pierced the Nepaul hills under Ochterlony when three British columns were beaten back, opened his ranks to let through

the fugitives of two British regiments at Bhurtpoor, and then went himself into the breach. He has been marched out to overawe mutinous English soldiers, and even in one day of shame to prevent them from running away. These remarks are of course not written to insinuate that Jack Sepoy is equal to that matchless musketeer, private John Bull, but to show that Jack Sepoy when well led has sometimes fought as well as John Bull, and John Bull when badly led has sometimes fought as badly as Jack Sepoy. Under Hodson, Read, and Jock Aitken we saw what the Sepoy (*Spahi*, black-faced soldier) could do even in the mutiny year; and we know what he was under men like Ochterlony, Littler, and Nott; brave, patient, enduring, serviceable, when well handled, winning victories unaided when the numbers were quite as disproportionate and the foe as formidable as the Beloochees at Meanee; a rapid marcher, a good skirmisher, a good gunner, a matchless light-horseman, rising to the heroic at times,—as when the Bengal Grenadiers in Clive's

days, under sentence of death for mutiny, haughtily demanded to be blown first from the guns; or when the Sepoys of the treason party in the confines of Oude, being surrounded by Dacoits, refused quarter, and elected to die along with their English officers.

Well, this contradictory, impulsive Asiatic, true or treacherous, brave or timorous, patient or petulant, as the mood strikes him, is now under the eye of the philosophic Mr Simpkin. He can study him *en déshabille*, if he feel so inclined; can see him bathe, pray, cook his large flat flour-cakes, wrestle, swagger, doze in the shade, or chant his hymns and war-songs by the camp watch-fire. He can study him, know him, and master him if he like, as did the old Indian officer; or he may consider soldier's work *infra dig.*, and soldiers doing soldiers' work the scum of the army, such theories being now popular in this present India of Colonel Boshington. Popular but dangerous theories, if Jack Sepoy should also think his officer contemptible;

should find him shorn of power, should become sensible of the fact that India is almost denuded of English troops, and the arsenals are unguarded. He is a savage, with a savage's treachery, cunning, and cruelty, as well as docility. He has conflicting duties, duties to his salt, and duties to his fellow black men, and his god Bhowanee the destroyer, or Allah the exterminator of infidels. Also he has a private and personal feeling against pipe-clay restraint, and in favour of *loot*. He is a mercenary, the most faithful the world has seen, but still a mercenary ; and from his alien officer every shred of power has been taken away.

But Miss Sophy has come down for the ball.

A large Indian ball, when the rooms are well filled, presents a gay scene. In the first place, Indian ball-rooms are especially lofty and roomy, and Government House, Barrackpore, was furnished with a very fine ball-room indeed. The band of the Artillery was sighing

out the soft notes of that very popular waltz, the 'Whisper,' as Sophy entered the room on the arm of Mr Vesey, and the young lady, who had seen a military ball at Exeter, was astonished at the sight presented to her. The ladies' dresses, the red coats, the blue coats, the dragoons, the irregular cavalry men, with rich Cashmere shawls twisted round their heads and waists, the native rajahs and princes with their large diamonds, their muslins, and stiff gold embroidery, all flashed at once upon her eye in a confused glitter. Mr Vesey found a seat for her and his wife, and they watched the waltzing from a commanding point of view.

I don't think that for some time Sophy saw the particular object that she was most in search of. She saw Captain Lemesurier waltzing skilfully along. He is in a handsome uniform, and being moreover a man in authority he shines to-night. She saw Captain Spink. He has on a still more dazzling uniform, but the advantages he gains in dress he throws away from want of skill in a 'round dance.'

Charley Simpkin toiling away under the disadvantage of a new full-dress uniform, is nevertheless acquitting himself with credit. The 'racing civilians' are going at a furious pace, but their black coats to-night are somewhat eclipsed. When the dance is over, and indeed before that time, her observations are brought to a close by the crowd of eager gentlemen who press round her for dances. A similar but smaller crowd is at no great distance from her. She is able to pierce it for a moment with her eye, but that is not what she is looking for, that is only Miss Blenkinsop, the Barrackpore *belle*. A third crowd she sees in a remote corner of the room, round the lady Miss Sophy intends utterly to collapse.

Charley Simpkin during the evening enjoyed himself pretty well. He was only able to engage Sophy for a quadrille, and that is not to come off for some time. During one dance, not being engaged to any partner, he was leaning against the door-post of one of the smaller rooms, when his attention was

attracted by one of the natives of rank. This was a thin, wiry little man with piercing black eyes. He wore a rich shawl for a turban, green with gold embroidery, and his body-coat and pajamas were of *Kincob*. Another handsome Cashmere shawl was round his waist, and a handsome ruby was stuck in the folds of the turban. Other jewels glittered on his person.

‘Curzon, who’s that native there?’ our young friend whispered to his brother officer who was passing at the moment.

‘Oh, that! That’s Fuzl Ali, the Head Vukeel of the Nawaub of Nawaubgunge. He’s down in Calcutta on a special mission on some matter or other!’

Charley Simpkin continued to watch the native, and presently Colonel Boshington (Army Routine Department) happened to pass by. The Colonel looked rather imposing in his full-dress staff uniform, adorned with the order of the Bath (Civil Branch, for the Colonel had never yet been sufficiently fortunate to see a shot fired in anger). Fuzl Ali

salaamed to him with profound respect, and amongst other compliments assured the Colonel that he was the protector of the suffering, that his intellect was sharp as a point of Kusa grass, and that he was a very lion in the art of war. Directly, however, the said lion was out of ear-shot, Fuzl Ali's manner suddenly changed, and his countenance assumed a look of quick intelligence in which contempt was plainly mingled. He spoke a few words to another richly-dressed native, his companion, which the latter seemed to deprecate by word and gesture. The native with the black piercing eyes replied scornfully, and his manner was so expressive that he seemed to say that nobody had sense enough to understand what they were talking of, at least, that was the purport of his remark, according to the guesses of Charley Simpkin. Fuzl Ali had scarcely finished his sentence when his whole manner again changed, and in spite of his great command over his countenance, seemed fairly disconcerted. Charley Simpkin looked round and saw Captain Ash-

leigh standing close to them. Fuzl Ali made a bow conveying far more real respect than his exaggerated *salaam* to Colonel Boshington. He seemed to know *Ashleigh Sahib*, for he addressed him at once by name. When their eyes met the native seemed keenly to scrutinize the English officer, and not without uneasiness, but Captain Ashleigh was quiet and composed, and merely said, 'What, are you there, Fuzl Ali?'

'What did that black prince say, Ashleigh?' said Charley Simpkin, a moment afterwards.

'He said that Colonel Boshington was a lion in the art of war!' replied the Captain rather dryly, as he walked away.

'Just as I thought!' muttered the young man. 'These Indian officers are drilled into mere machines. God's faculty of reason is pipe-clayed out of them. They see nothing even under their very noses!' The keen glance of the lean native had fascinated the Ensign. It had wandered to where Colonel Boshington, Mr Windus, Mr Prettijohn, and

other exalted personages were collected round a personage the most exalted of all. You will think it great disrespect on the young man's part, but he had lately been studying the writings of Mr Carlyle, and this is the thought that suddenly came into his mind.

He looked upon all these great officers of state as so many of that popular writer's 'Windbags!' which the glance of the native seemed to pierce and utterly collapse.

And now Mr Charles Simpkin was to receive a rude shock. He had returned to the ball-room, and was watching a quadrille. He saw Mr Palmer Brown dancing away with Sophy. He saw Major Pulfington Belper, her *vis-à-vis*, labouring through the figures. Whilst Charley was inwardly chuckling at the Field-officer's evolutions, he little judged that with three cruel words it was in the power of that grotesque dancer to smite him into the dust.

Others besides Ensign Charles Simpkin were carefully watching Miss Sophy. She had now danced three dances with her present partner. Every one was talking of her, as they

will under such circumstances in India ; every one was talking of him. The Secretary to the Foolscap Department was like the moon, a round body shining with borrowed light. At any rate there was little in his exterior which of itself could rivet the gaze of a large and fashionable assembly.

The first thing that struck you on beholding Mr Palmer Brown, was that he was a well-shaven man. Oddly enough, on glancing at his face this point was apparent even before you noticed the evidences of his great political talents. The properties of his shaving-paste, the principle of his razor-strop, and the temper of his razors must all have been perfect to produce so clean and so smooth a surface, and to separate the unshaved portion by such a crisp, straight, black line. As to the evidences of his fine talents they were not so prominent. Charley Simpkin declared he could never see them at all, but then he was perusing the countenance of a rival. A dumpy, rotund, neatly-dressed man, his fat inexpressive face might have marked talent or stupidity, courage or cruelty,

a warm or a selfish cold heart. He only looked—to the first gaze of the stranger—a sleek, bloated nonentity.

‘What about the Elegant Entangler? hey!’ The Major in a moment of excessive imbecility had given Sophy this unmeaning nickname, and it had been retained by the Major’s immediate friends.

‘Why, Major, she has had an accomplished *vis-à-vis*, and a brilliant partner, and must be sorry that the dance has come to a close!’

‘She is likely to have a much longer dance with the same brilliant partner, young man! Haven’t you heard it?’

‘Heard what, Major?’

‘She’s engaged to him!’

‘What, to that pasty dumpling—to that Jack Pudding!’

‘To Mr Palmer Brown. For God’s sake, Simpkin, don’t call a Calcutta Secretary a “pasty dumpling”—in the presence of the Governor-General of India!’

‘Halloa, Simpkin, there you are at last. Why, that full-dress gold collar of yours makes

your eyes start out of your head like gooseberries, and you look half choked. Here's Miss Blenkinsop! You don't expect your partners to find you out, do you? This is your waltz.' And Mr Chiffney Chaffney handed over a young lady with super-abundant light frizzly hair and restless eyes. I fear that Ensign Simpkin did not much enjoy that waltz with Miss Blenkinsop, and I fear that Miss Blenkinsop did not much enjoy that waltz with Ensign Simpkin.

Meanwhile Sophy, ignorant of all the interest she was exciting, was thoroughly enjoying herself. Accustomed to the admiration paid to a beauty in an English ball-room, she had still little conception of what it was to be the *belle* of an Indian ball-room. Angle-Indians are the most gallant of the world's cavaliers; and Judges, and Dragoons, Collectors and Bengal Captains, bearded Irregular Cavalry men, and Sepoy Ensigns battled together for the tiniest corner of her card. She felt that the other beauties were all eclipsed. She felt that her appearance had made a sensation, and

Major Pulfington Belper was the fortunate witness of her greatest triumph of all. After each dance the dancers walked round the room, and as the Major was conducting her past the upper end where the persons of the very highest consideration were seated, he and she both caught these words :

‘ And that’s the celebrated Miss Sophy Brabazon, is it ? The young lady in the white silk dress ! ’

They looked round, and were quite startled to see from what a lofty personage the words really proceeded.

But in the history of the world few victories are complete. A trifling circumstance occurred a little later which galled her in the hour of her triumph. During one of her dances with Mr Palmer Brown, when they were walking round the room, she suddenly saw a grave earnest face looking at her and her partner, and that with so scared an expression that it riveted her eyes. Its features were not irregular, they were clear cut, and certain perpendicular lines gave it rather a worn expres-

sion. The nose was rather prominent, and the complexion very much sun-burnt. She could only see the gentleman's face, and when she asked who it was and tried to point him out to Mr Palmer Brown, the face had disappeared.

Later on in the evening she was engaged to a civilian of some standing, for a quadrille. Mr Choprow was too solid to indulge much in airy small-talk, and so the conversation languished. By accident they had taken up their position close to where Mr Vesey was standing talking to a friend, and as Sophy could get nothing out of her partner she was forced to hear a great deal of the conversation behind her.

‘And what have you been doing all this long time? I hear that you have turned Yogi’ (Hindoo devotee).

‘The pious Brahmins,’ answered a voice, not Mr Vesey’s, ‘recommend, you know, a life of meditation and seclusion as the fittest for the philosopher and the seeker of peace. In forests and on rocks and mountains, the god

Crishnu alone reveals the serenity of his countenance. But my solitude was rather forced, and I have been shooting a great deal, in fact, taking more lives than is consistent with the Hindoo scheme of excellence.'

But Mr Choprow, though a little ignorant of the formalities of the dance, had now discovered that it was his turn to lead Sophy forward, and so the conversation was interrupted.

When she returned she heard Mr Vesey say, 'Well, well, I am delighted to have met you. You really must go and see Mrs Vesey at once. She will never forgive me if you don't; but how is this you are not dancing? Look here—'

The conversation was now carried on in whispers for some time, and the only words Sophy could catch were, 'No, I assure you it is quite out of my line!' but she knew instinctively that they had talked of her, and that the gentleman had refused to be introduced; but they had also said a great deal more than that. As he came from behind

the pillar which had hitherto concealed him, she saw his face. It was the same she had noticed staring at her from the crowd, an officer in a rifle uniform whose breast was covered with medals. Her adventures with him that evening were not yet over.

Charley Simpkin met with rather an adventure during his waltz with Miss Blenkinsop. His friends observed that his style of dancing had very much changed, and that he was now spinning up and down the room in a reckless manner, and completely distancing the 'racing civilians.' This style had its inconveniences, for happening to trip over the long spurs of Captain Spink, who was floundering awkwardly about in wrong places, our young friend, with his partner, would have had an awkward fall if they had not been arrested by a colossal bolster in the soft and portly person of Colonel Boshington. That grave officer, to his great surprise, found himself rushing backwards and stamping on the foot of the Calcutta official to whom he was talking. That foot, a small neat one,

was nearly pulverized, as the Colonel was a man of great weight, whose foot was not small and neat.

‘Hey, sir!—dash it, sir! What do you mean, sir!’ cried the officer of the Routine Department, as soon as he could recover his breath. ‘This is most unprecedented, sir! You’ll find, sir, that an officer of rank is not to be trifled with! It is a breach of the articles of war, sir. You have rendered yourself liable to a court martial, sir. Dash it, sir, a court martial!’

It must be mentioned in this officer’s favour that this strong language on his part was quite exceptional, as Colonel Boshington was serious, theologically as well as *physiologically*. But suddenly to receive a vigorous waltzer plump in the middle of your abdomen is enough to unsettle the most strict.

‘I am afraid you hurt him very much!’ said Miss Blenkinsop when they had slided away again to a remote part of the room. ‘I was so, *so* frightened!’

‘I am not very frightened about it, nor

very sorry. He's like one of the enemies of the Psalmist, inclosed in his own fat and his mouth speaking proud things !'

'Oh, how very wicked you are ! I am quite afraid of you. I was told you were very wicked and amusing ; and what do you think ?—at first I thought you very stupid. I did, indeed. See the other man, he's hurt, he's limping out of the room. Mr Palmer Brown, I think ?'

'I'm still less sorry about *him* ! It is the first time I've seen him dance properly to-night.'

'You gave the Colonel a good *shunt*, at any rate !' said Miss Blenkinsop, who affected military slang.

When he had resigned his partner, Charley Simpkin hurried off, he scarcely knew whither. Suddenly he found himself in the corner where Mrs Vesey was sitting. 'She will know, at any rate !' thought he. She was quite alone, and he took the vacant seat near her.

'What is this little secret, Mrs Vesey, that

you have kept so well all day? Had I been better informed I should have offered my congratulations.'

'Secret! Congratulations! I have no idea, Mr Simpkin, to what you allude!'

'You mean to tell me, Mrs Vesey, you did not know that Miss Sophy Brabazon was engaged to be married!'

'Engaged to be married! You must be joking, Mr Simpkin! what do you mean?'

Our young friend then narrated all that had been told him by Major Pulfington Belper.

'A most improbable story! I am sure there must be some mistake!' said Mrs Vesey when she had heard the narrative. She looked, however, far more uneasy than she wished to show. Her husband came up a short time afterwards, and she conversed with him in a low tone of voice. Both Mr Vesey and his wife seemed as much affected by the news as the ardent young Ensign himself.

The latter had left them and had with-

drawn to some distance, when looking round he found that Captain Ashleigh had joined them, and all three were conversing anxiously in a low tone of voice. Charley Simpkin took out his card of the dances, and found he was now engaged for a quadrille with Miss Sophy.

‘Insult to injury!’ he muttered, forgetting that the compact was of his own binding. ‘I won’t dance with her!’ He waited patiently until he saw her led back to her seat near Mrs Vesey, and then went up to her.

‘You must excuse me for this quadrille, Miss Sophy Brabazon. I don’t feel quite well. I’ve had a sort of a—’

‘Shock; yes, I saw it, against that funny old Colonel.’

‘Yes; a shock,’ replied the Ensign, attempting something the manner of a tragedian who finds the stage direction ‘bitterly’ opposite a sentence in his part.

‘It made me laugh very much. I was a long way off. I hope you are really not much hurt.’

‘Hurt! No! I dare say I shall get over it.’

‘Poor boy! He seems put out with something?’ said Sophy, after he had left.

‘As you have lost one partner, allow me to provide another, and introduce Captain Ashleigh to you.’

‘Why, really,’ interrupted the Captain, ‘I am so bad a dancer—I am, in fact, no dancer at all.’

‘Oh, nonsense! I insist on your making him dance, Sophy! He’s getting quite a bear!’

‘And bears must be taught to dance!’ chimed in Mr Vesey, and Captain Ashleigh was forced to offer his arm to Miss Sophy Brabazon.

‘It is the officer who refused to be introduced just now,’ thought the young lady. ‘Ashleigh, that is the name of the Captain living with Charley Simpkin, who is so afraid of ladies. He deserves to be quizzed a little, I think I’ll draw him out! How bashful and timid we are!’

And carried away by the intoxication of her recent triumph she said things to a com-

plete stranger which would have astonished her at any other time. Which did he like best, waltzes or polkas? All Indian officers were great dancers, were they not? And great admirers of ladies' toilettes. Which lady's toilette did he admire most that night? Was it not true that all officers in India were much more attentive to ladies than gentlemen in England? What was the reason of that fact? Was it the idle Indian life, or the chivalry always associated with the career of arms? Thus she rattled on. Two things struck her. Though Captain Ashleigh was a stranger, all this frankness seemed to come quite natural to her when talking to him. Also he seemed to take it quite as a matter of course, and to talk to her as if he had known her well for years.

‘You must think me a great chatterbox! Confess you never talked to such a giddy young lady before.’

‘On the contrary, it seems as if I could have guessed beforehand almost every word you would utter.’

‘Indeed—you surprise me very much! You must be a great judge of character to guess that I should be so giddy.’

‘I think I can guess your character.’

‘Is it so much on the surface?’

‘No.’

‘Then how could you know I would rattle on in this way? What motive could I have had?’

‘Don’t you know why you said all these things?’

‘Upon my soul, I have almost forgotten. Tell me—you who are so unexpectedly and alarmingly prescient. Give me a proof of your powers.’

‘You were told by little Simpkin that I avoided ladies’ society, and a love of fun is one of your three most prominent characteristics.’

‘Well, I must confess that there is a charming frankness about Indian manners, which I had been led to expect in India, but with regard to which I had hitherto been most woefully disappointed.’

‘Frankness for frankness, have not you been frank?’

‘Oh, I am not complaining. You have already settled three of my most prominent characteristics. I insist upon your telling me the other two.’

‘One is your strength and the other your weakness.’

‘Oh, then by all means the weakness first.

‘Your second, your weakness, is vanity. Your third, your strength, is pride.’

‘Vanity! Pride! I curtsey low! ’Pon my word, I don’t know which I ought most to be thankful for!’

‘The two qualities are widely distinct, if I had time to give you a sermon!’

‘A sermon, do, do! To an accompaniment of trombones and fiddles.’

‘Vanity is a woman’s weak point which the enemy—’

‘Of her soul—give your sermon a proper twang—’

‘Exactly; but the enemy now-a-days

wears crinoline and not horns, and tempts with a tree not of knowledge but of glare and glitter and children's toys. Dresses and jewels and tinsel rivalries and ambitions are petty things enough, and the instinct that is traded on is at bottom a wholesome instinct, for it is deep in woman's nature to cling to all that adorns and refines this commonplace world. The pitiable circumstance is, that the mountain guide, whose duty it is to look after the traveller, should lead her not from but to the precipice. Many poor victims have I seen who were innocent and gentle, but they lacked one quality—pride !'

'Pride !' said Miss Sophy, on whom the solemn and almost tender tones of the Captain's voice had made an impression.

'Yes, the pride that shrinks from the mean path to a mean end.'

'Admirable,' said Sophy, recovering herself, 'but suppose, sir, you should have been a little hasty in adopting the unfavourable tittle-tattle of idle Indian society about a perfect stranger.'

‘I have not adopted the tittle-tattle of Indian society, I have rejected it.’

‘Rejected it! Rejected what? Explain!’

‘To a perfect stranger?’

‘Yes, the rebuke is merited! How funny this conversation is. But do tell me—you seem kind and obliging—do tell me what you meant by the tittle-tattle you referred to.’

‘First they say you are a coquette.’

‘A coquette! Oh, I suppose all ladies are called that, and what can they—what can you know—’

‘Nothing; yet—’

‘How do you mean?’

‘India is a burning crucible, and you have not yet been put to the test. Shall I tell you what else they say of you?’

‘Pray do; this is getting quite confidential.’

‘They say you are engaged to be married!’ Captain Ashleigh seemed to glance at her as he pronounced these words.

‘To be married—I!’

‘To Mr Palmer Brown.’

‘I engaged to be married to Mr Palmer Brown!’

‘It is not true, I am well aware—’

‘Really, Captain Ashleigh, this is going a little too far. What can you possibly know upon subjects like the present?’

‘I know the report is not true.’

‘How do you know that?’

‘Because you are the friend of Mrs Vesey.’

‘I can’t see the connection of your reasoning.’

‘Whilst you are the firm friend of Mrs Vesey you will never give your hand to a man whom you do not love.’ There was some solemnity in the tone of the Captain as he spoke these words.

‘I am afraid I must ask you to take me back to my seat, as I see a tiresome man looking for me for the next dance. How have you come to form such positive conclusions!’ This last question she tried not to ask, but it would come out.

‘I have gained my facts from my knowledge of you — nothing more.’ This was

the end of this mysterious conversation. Regarded in the light of a mere skirmish with 'the enemy,' Sophy was forced to confess that it was a failure. The awkward officer, instead of being 'drawn out,' had on the whole rather drawn her out.

'It is not true!' whispered Captain Ashleigh to Mrs Vesey as he shook hands with her at parting.

'Thank God for that!' she replied with fervour. Why should Mrs Vesey thank God that Sophy was not engaged to the Calcutta Secretary for the Foolscap Department?

Ensign Charles Simpkin on entering his bungalow that night called for two bottles of soda-water and some brandy. This not being brought quick enough, he called his servant a pig and the son of an owl. This was the first example of Eastern metaphor that he had yet employed towards any of his native servants. Two bottles of soda-water were scarcely sufficient to quench his insatiable thirst. A book was open upon the bed. It was the 'Sakontala,' Major Pulfington Belper's favourite

drama. Charley found the leaf turned down at a passage which had struck him immensely when the bearer was brushing his hair just before the ball.

‘ Could mortal to such charms give birth ?
The lightning flashes not from earth.’

There was little logic and less justice in the impulse which almost moved him to throw the volume at the ‘ Blinking Idolater’s ’ head.

For half the night he tossed in his bed, but at last he went to sleep and had a dream. He dreamt he was King Dushyanta, mounted on ‘ Tippoo,’ which seemed indeed to outstrip the horses of Indra and the sun, but which, as it had its head well down, was on its way—at least so His Majesty could not help fancying—to the Mess of the 44th Nowgong Native Infantry. Suddenly the sacred penitential groves came in sight with the fawns and the parrots ; and soon the lovely Sakontala appeared watering the jasmynes, and looking very like Miss Sophy Brabazon.

‘ What portents my throbbing arm ! ’ As a Hindoo prince our young friend knew that this whispered a happy ending to his passion.

Suddenly a vague terror came over him that something dreadful was going to happen to her, and she seemed to beckon to him for assistance. The sunny garden changed, the Patala or trumpet flower, the Acacia Serisha, and the orange scarlet flowers of the beautiful Asoka tree, were whirled away, and all seemed dark and grim. He looked down, and finding that he had on his full-dress uniform he drew his sword and advanced to her protection. Suddenly Mr Palmer Brown with a keen rapier seems to attack him, and the Ensign is compelled to employ all the skill of fence picked up in the rooms of Messrs Angelo to defend himself. And behold the sword of Mr Palmer Brown seems to curve about in a most singular manner, and our young friend discovers that it has changed into a scimitar, and that his antagonist has become the lean sharp native of the ball. The latter appears suddenly to drop his weapon and direct his

piercing eye full into the Ensign's face, who then felt himself fascinated, paralyzed, unable to stir limb or muscle. The moment of agony was extreme. He seemed to take in everything, his own helplessness, the helplessness of Miss Sophy Brabazon, and the native seemed to see all this, and to take a delight in prolonging his intense misery. Suddenly a voice very like Captain Ashleigh's said very calmly,

‘Hulloa, Fuzl Ali, is that you?’

And then the native on his part seemed struck with extreme terror and fled.

A slim waist, which the young officer knew to be Miss Brabazon's, was now within his grasp, and he felt himself waltzing round and round in the most ecstatic manner.

‘You will not again doubt me!’ a sweet voice exclaimed; there was the sweetest of smiles on the sweetest of faces.

‘Never!’

‘Nor *abandon* me in the dance?’ she laughingly continued. There was much comic force in the emphasis of the word ‘abandon.’

‘Never, never! Thus let us dance on for ever!’

Suddenly, however, the slim waist of Miss Sophy began to get bigger and bigger, and her form to get heavier and heavier.

‘Hey, sir—confound it, sir—dash it, sir!’ said the young lady. ‘To waltz with a military secretary is most unprecedented, sir! It is a breach of the articles of war, sir. You have rendered yourself liable to a court-martial—dash it, sir—a court-martial!’

And the Ensign found himself whirling rapidly round in the dance Colonel Boshington, Military Secretary, Army Routine Department.

CHAPTER V.

THE BRIGADIER'S GATES.

MR CHARLES SIMPKIN TO MISS DORA STADLEIGH,
BUDLEIGH SALTERTON, DEVON.

' Barrackpore, December 4th, 185—.

' DEAR DORA,—

' What an outrageous abuse of authority ! I knew that Brigadier Dewsnap had refused everybody every possible indulgence,—but fancy a meritorious officer like me refused leave to go to-night to the ball at the Town Hall, Calcutta, and that because my application was not written in a legible hand. An officer in command of a brigade of soldiers actually finds fault with a man's handwriting like a crabbed old governess ! Mark the moderation of your amiable cor-

respondent, who has courtesy enough to suppress the obvious sarcasm which traces *another point* of resemblance between the Brigadier and a governess !

‘ A bad handwriting indeed ! The idea is preposterous. No man of genius writes like a *Baboo*. But handwriting denotes character, and a man holding an important post should at least have penetration enough to recognize from his handwriting a more than ordinary man, even if he could not, like Madame Pattes de Mouche, recognize—a Simpkin (for the moderate charge of one shilling. *See Advertisements*).

‘ Here must I undergo cruel incarceration whilst all Calcutta is basking in the sunshine of Sophy Brabazon’s beauty. Those silly young civilians are chirping around her ; and Mr Chiffney Chaffney is giving her the freshest *bon mot* from Cooke’s Livery Stables. The idiotic Spink is blundering through the dance ; and as for that atrocious fat little Secretary, let me not think of him. I told you of the ridiculous “shave” we had down here

about him and her. It turns out it was some mistake of old Pulfington Belper. Somebody told him Mr Palmer Brown was engaged to Tiffin, or upon an animated public correspondence with the Rajah of Kedgere, or that Miss Sophy was engaged for the fourth waltz, or something of the kind, and in his usual absence of mind he manufactured the *canard* alluded to. He has gone off to the ball in a bran-new uniform. The old gentleman is most desperately and most hopelessly in love. Now for any old (or even young) gentleman to be desperately in love and at the same time hopelessly is foolish.—Argal; Major Pulfington Belper is foolish!

‘Fancy my being doomed to remain here. Ought I not to invoke a million curses on the head of him who hinders me?’

‘May the Brigadier commanding be kept awake all night by the shrillest of musk rats. May his curry, his chutney, his pillau, his kabobs, all disagree with him. May armies of the most venomous mosquitoes lash him into a frenzy of multitudinous microscopic

tortures ! May he be visited by the most turbid of dreams.

‘ A thought strikes me. I can relieve my feelings of disgust, and I can relieve the monotony of my solitude, by sketching Brigadier Dewsnap’s character from *his* handwriting. Does not its general scratchy and angular crookedness give even the tyro a glimpse of the class of mind of which it is significant ! Of course such a man would refuse to grant the most rational indulgences. Why, the very way in which those *t*’s are crossed denotes the capricious manner in which he would cross everybody he could in every imaginable innocent gratification, and the exaggerated violence of his severity is manifested in those harsh down-strokes. Every word, every letter, announces, as clearly as words and letters can announce, that the signature at the bottom belongs to a gentleman whose affability and good temper have been entirely destroyed by too long a residence in a tropical climate. Musquitoes, musk rats, cayenne cookery, and prickly heat, have produced ex-

cessive irritability, whilst mullagatawny and monsoons have evidently deranged the functions of his liver.

‘Brigadier Dewsnap has been all his life a Civil Engineer, and perhaps the construction of roads in flinty and rocky districts may have also had its effect on what was soft in his nature. The ways of the Indian Government are droll. In any other army but the Indian army if search had to be made for the fittest man to command a body of soldiers, the choice would have fallen on a soldier and not on a builder of bungalows.

‘I don’t quarrel with the Brigadier as an engineer. I dare say not more than half of his barracks have yet fallen down. I have seen one of his bridges. It is a very pretty one, and is not within forty yards of any river, but this is not unusual in India where rivers are migratory. What I find fault with is his having penned the following—making, as I do, every allowance for the fact that the Brigadier came into the service long before army examinations were established.

“Returned.

“The Brigadier commanding will steadily refuse to grant any indulgences to all officers who are too careless to comply with regulations—which distinctly lay down that their hand must be legible, and in black and not blue ink—which is as essential to a due discharge of military duties as courage in the field and discipline in the cantonments, which young officers will bear always in mind.

C. DEWSNAP.”

‘You will agree with me that if the Brigadier constructed his edifices no better than his sentences, people would have some hesitation in living in them.

* * * * *

‘I was forced to break off, and have not been able to go on for two or three days. My friend Major Pulfington Belper did not enjoy the ball. He favoured me the next morning with the results of forty or fifty years’ close study of the mission of woman in the world, but his conclusions don’t seem to be in any way definite or satisfactory.

“ ‘Pon my word, Simpkin, I really can't make 'em out. Woman was evidently sent to console man, and I don't think any man can be really happy unless he is married. It's a law of nature, you know, which can't be broken. You must marry one day, so must I. But, by heavens, if woman is miraculously organized for the purpose of soothing, she is organized in equal perfection to irritate and drive a man frantic. These Calcutta young ladies! They can't understand any devotion but that of the *Durveesh*! We must marry some day, for marriage with a lady-like woman refines and elevates. Gad, for refinement and rudeness that sex is matchless.”

‘Beauties’ out here become more saucy than in England. They receive so much more attention. Some of them were a little pert, no doubt, to my friend, who is no great dancer. It is said that the young ladies in this country engage themselves to as many partners as they can for each dance, and then select the one they like best. There is no doubt gross exaggeration in this as in all

other pithy sayings, and I can point out *one* young lady at least who does nothing of the kind. Woman's mission! Observe, my fair correspondent, how your sex bewilders philosophers even of the profundity of—Major Pulfington Belper. I know a young lady more shrewd, clever, and witty than most of her sex, more pure and unselfish, more—(but mere physical advantages are quite beneath the consideration of elevated minds!) What, in the name of goodness, can cause so gifted a lady to prefer before all gentlemen and philosophers, a mere pudding of a man, with pudding brains, pudding shape, and pudding for soul? He has just enough intellect to make the pudding of this world his sole scheme of life, and such men always succeed, at least in the eyes of those who consider this round globe one gigantic pudding. Positively, I won't believe that she can love such a man as this.

‘Brigadier Dewsnap, commanding, has just experienced an example of that retribution which always overtakes a breach of the law

of right and wrong. A custom has arisen in military cantonments in India, of which it would be difficult to explain the origin. Whenever any Brigadier or Colonel makes himself particularly obnoxious people go and pull down the gates of his *compound* (enclosure round his house). I don't know that there is much meaning in the act, or if it contains any hidden satire. All I know is, that a party of the younger officers, all of us injured in some way or another, proposed that this act of signal vengeance should be executed upon the Brigadier. After mess we sallied out and boldly demolished his gates. The Brigadier was furious. Imagine Timour the Tartar with his nose tweaked, or Colonel Boshington asked politely by an ensign to take wine, or Tippoo Sultaun poked familiarly in the ribs at a moment when he was enjoying his tiger-toy, and you have some idea of the terrific anger of this most irritable Brigade officer. He ordered a patrol of thirty men in the main road of cantonments every night, until further orders. The event, trifling

as it may seem, has produced an immense sensation. To-night or to-morrow night there is some talk of repeating the act, only this is in the strictest confidence. I hear that a certain young lady made more sensation than ever the other night at the ball—a certain young lady whom the angels call Lenore—lost to me for evermore.

‘Yours, &c.’

The excitement caused by the act of hostility of Ensign Simpkin and his young friends was now indeed great at Barrackpore. Officers sipping their coffee under the verandah of the mess house after parade have not much to talk about, and the Brigadier’s gates furnished a pleasing change to minds a little fatigued by Major Tomkinson and his ‘line step,’ and by the great Calcutta question of the vacant Residency at Nawaubgunge. But this excitement was much augmented when the insubordinate young men repeated their operations a few days afterwards. The old officers began to speak seriously about it, and

hinted in the presence of the presumed offenders, that they were running great risks. Nothing daunted, the young Samsons, the very day after they had carried away the gates, called on the Brigadier and added insult to injury.

‘Is the Brigadier Sahib at home?’

‘*Durwaze bund Sahib log,*’ said the Brigadier’s black servant. ‘The Brigadier Sahib is unwell, and does not receive to-day. The gates are closed!’

Lekin durwaze kis turuh se bund ho gye—koi durwaza nahin hai! remarked Ensign Hodges. (‘But how can the gates be shut? There don’t seem to be any gates to close!’ The pleasantry was reported to the Brigadier, and it made him more furious than ever.

Of the old officers none was more shocked at these proceedings than our old friend, Major Pulfington Belper. Veneration for all authority was his leading characteristic, as we have before noticed, and many were the stories current against him in the regiment upon this

particular point. One day, at Simla, he had conversed with a fat gentleman who sat next to him at dinner, as if he was talking to an ordinary Major Smith or Colonel Brown. 'I didn't know, you know, that it was the Secretary to the Army Routine Department!' He was never tired of thus apologizing to all comers for his mistake; and at the same place, when he was drinking his tea one morning in the verandah, he heard a noise, and rushed out with a shrill *Chup rao, soor log!* (Be silent, O generation of pigs!) What was his consternation to find himself suddenly confronted with The Most N-ble, the G-vernor General of Ind-a! It is said that his bewildered appearance as he stood with his spectacles on his red nose, in his shirt and pagamas, without coat or hat, attempting all sorts of salutes and impromptu gestures of respect, was so comical, that it extorted a smile from that grave functionary, who happened to have lost his way.

Upon the present occasion Major Pulfington Belper strongly denounced the conduct

of the young men. ‘It’s mutiny! Begad, it’s mutiny! Those young fellows had better be careful, Simpkin, they had indeed. It’s very serious! Hey!’ He even thought it right to call upon the Brigadier to let him know quietly—using of course all possible tact in so delicate a matter—that the feeling of the station was quite against all these proceedings. This well-meant kindness was not taken in very good part.

‘D— the station, sir, and you too!’ vociferated Brigadier Dewsnap, who, it must be confessed, had a casing of flannel on one of his legs at the time. ‘Do you take me for a baby, sir, that I can’t look after myself? Have I been in the service forty-three years, sir, or have I not! And during that time have I had all my subordinates under my thumb, sir, or have I not! Under my thumb, sir—mind, under my thumb! Nobody could yet say that his life was his own when under me, sir, and I’ll take care they shan’t now. Wait a bit, sir, and you’ll see that I’m quite able to protect myself, sir.’

And to show that he was thus able, he issued an order that very day that 200 Sepoys should patrol the roads every night under the orders of the Field-officer of the week, with two European subalterns. Masons also and builders appeared next day in the Brigadier's compound, and the Ex-Civil Engineer was seen in his *sola topee*, and without his coat, superintending preparations on a large scale. In a few days two very massive brick pillars replaced the old wooden gate-posts, and a very strong timber barrier with iron spikes at the top was set up. Major Balderson, the Major of Brigade, assisted upon these 'works,' with trowel and pick. Major Balderson had rather a time of it under Brigadier Dewsnap.

The Brigadier's house was by far the largest and most straggling house in cantonments. Also it might almost be said that it was entirely unfurnished. A camp bedstead and a brass wash-hand basin were in one room, and half-a-dozen chairs and an old table in the large dining-room. The Brigadier, always unsocial, and at present uncertain about the

duration of his command, was professedly living 'camp fashion.' The remaining furniture of the dining-room consisted of specimens of the Brigadier's skill in mechanical inventions, upon which he rather prided himself. There was a wonderful 'thermantidote,' a machine used in the hot season to produce an artificial current of air by means of a wheel turned by hand-labour. Also there was a wonderful circular punkah which nobody had yet seen in working order. Then there were half-a-dozen hats of remarkable construction, designed to protect the head against the Indian sun. Of these it might be said generically that Col. Dewsnap had the various grotesque developments of the toadstool in mind, when shaping every one of them. Each was three times as large as an ordinary hat. One was like a gigantic flat toadstool, with a low crown rising up in the middle. One was like a large planter's hat, protected by a 'Cole's cupola,' pierced for six guns. The pyramids of Egypt seemed to have suggested the shape of another. All were made of pith, and had wonderful windows and

doors and curtains and inner cases. There amidst his hats and punkahs did our crabbed old friend sit all day, growling at his Sepoy orderlies, his servants, and his Brigade-Major. The latter was supremely thankful any day if he escaped an invitation to dine with his ill-tempered patron, who amongst other ingenious discoveries had invented a beer. He had started the idea of growing hops at Nynee Tal, in the Himalayas. Poor Major Balderson scarcely knew which was the most unpalatable at the Brigadier's board—his host's rude remarks, or his 'Sparkling Himalayan Burton.' The gold-laced cap of a Staff officer is prized absurdly high in India, but even that may perhaps be bought at too dear a price.

Before the Brigadier's massive barrier was quite completed another attempt was made upon it. Major Winkworth, the Field-officer on duty, was luke-warm in his patrolling, and so the effort was made with impunity, but was not very successful, owing to the strength of the Brigadier's obstructions. These were now quite completed, and the lukewarm Wink-

worth was replaced by an officer who was by no means lukewarm upon the subject.

‘Now look here, Simpkin,’ said Major Pulfington Belper, as the young man visited him one morning in his bungalow. ‘I’m Field-officer of the week now, and that gate-lifting business is very serious. I’ve told the Brigadier I’ll do my utmost to stop it, and I will too—begad—Hey! Why, if it comes to mere running, I could catch any young fellow in the station. They’ll find I’m not Winkworth.’

‘I hear, Major, that you’re the best runner in India, so those infatuated young men had better be careful.’

‘Yes, Simpkin, they had; mind, it’s no joking matter, they had,’ and the Field-officer looked gravely upon the subaltern.

The Major’s bungalow presented a curious scene. The furniture was incongruous, scanty, and half of it broken. Of his guns only one remained. In the various rooms his property was lying about in picturesque disorder. Uniform, coats, and swords, racket bats, quoits,

fencing masks, one broken foil, two single-sticks, three oars, several native *tulwars* (sabres), a prayer-book, a bottle of cholera mixture, another of Macassar oil, half a bottle of cognac, and six large order-books covered with brown leather ; these were some of the articles which Mr Charles Simpkin observed scattered around. On the wall was a triangle with pegs on which were hung forage caps and pith helmets. Three billiard cues were hung up to straighten. In one corner of the room were four cheroot boxes full of clay marbles, and alongside was the *guleel* bow, by aid of which these were propelled at crows and squirrels. In another corner were at least twenty bushels of carrots for the Major's horses. Four bear-skins were on the floor, and thrust into a corner in the bed-room was a pile of muslin, of which the Major had become the unwitting purchaser at the China bazar. At an auction he had bid for one piece, and found thirty pieces knocked down to him. The Sontals amongst whom the Major had lately sojourned have a peculiar axe, which they em-

ploy to cut down their trees in time of peace and their foes in time of war. Several specimens of these were lying about, also two crow-bars and a heavy mallet for pitching the Major's tent. Mr Simpkin seemed to glance with some interest at these various objects as he replied to the Major's somewhat pointed remark.

‘From the way in which you talk, Major, one would almost think that you believe that I am capable of annoying the esteemed amiable gentleman in command of the station.’

‘Oh no ; mind, Simpkin, I don't accuse any one.’

‘With his strong gates, his great engineering skill, with his smartly-dressed Brigade-Major to assist him in strengthening his masonry, and with an alert and swift-footed partisan to protect them, if those gates are not secure, what in life can be !’

‘Look here, Simpkin, fun is fun, and you young griffs, begad, are saucy young fellows. Hey ! But mutiny is a serious matter, and it is mutiny ! Besides, you young men of the

present day should really pay more respect to authority. You are all clever enough, no doubt, but you're not so clever as Burke, who said that a generous loyalty, a proud submission, a dignified obedience to rank, kept alive the spirit of exalted freedom. Chivalry and honour to age and rank, may be old-fashioned now—'

'But I tell you, Major, I honour Brigadier Dewsnap's grey hairs, and so, I'm sure, do all his other young admirers.'

'Here, Ashleigh, come and talk to this young mutineer about the Brigadier's gates!' Captain Ashleigh had appeared in the Major's *compound* at this moment.

'I suspect he knows as much as you or I can tell him, Major!' said the Captain, rather gruffly.

'He won't believe the matter to be most serious!'

'Won't he!' said the other, dryly. He was puffing a big cheroot in a manner which had before a little aggravated Charley Simpkin.

'Stop, Major!' said the latter, 'both you and the rest of the company seem to have

made one rather hasty assumption. You take it for granted that I am one of the culprits.'

'I think, Simpkin,' said Captain Ashleigh, 'that if you and your friends don't care about your own commissions, you might think about your brother-officers, and, above all, about the Sepoys, who get a deal of extra work through your folly.'

'But, as I said before—'

'I acquit you of knowing all the harm such acts may really be doing. You have not been long enough in the service to know how bad an example you are setting to the Sepoys, whose discipline is far from perfect as it is. We have had the Scinde mutiny, the Affghan mutiny, the Punjab mutiny, each of which only just failed to light up the whole army into a flame. Suppose that the next spark should be more successful.'

'Stop, Ashleigh,' said the whimsical Major, 'I think the bad example is now on your side. The Sepoy army mutiny! Begad, it is rank mutiny to say so! What says the great and wise Governor-General?'

‘Well, Major, a very much longer head than his thinks very differently,—Henry Lawrence, with whom I have the honour to correspond. I think that a young officer should be made to see in what position he stands. No harm can result from that if he really is a good fellow at bottom. Munro said long ago that the great danger to India would come from the Government sapping the power of regimental officers; and now I ask you what power has a company officer, what power a colonel?’

‘Why, Ashleigh. Hey! Is not this a direct attack upon the Commander-in-chief?’

‘I ask you this, Major. Did not Seetul Doobee of your company, after he was dismissed by court-martial, go up to Simla and *salam* to the Commander-in-chief in person, and was he not again restored merely on his own statement of his case and without any reference to the Colonel?’

‘Yes, that’s true, but—’

‘And is there not a similar instance in almost every regiment in the service?’

‘Yes, but the Governor-General, who, if

he would only see merit in other people besides the Scotch, is the wisest and most powerful ruler—'

'Has denuded the Bengal Presidency of English soldiers to feed his annexations at its extremities ; has shelved Henry Lawrence and driven away Napier, two men immeasurably his superiors ; has earned the hatred of the powerful natives and of the army, which latter he is going to put to further proof by annexing Oude.'

'I tell you what,' broke in Mr Simpkin, 'as you two gentlemen are not quite of one mind with regard to the lecture which is to be composed for my edification, I'll leave you to fight it out.'

There was a gravity in the Captain's manner, and a rough force in what he said, that made an impression on the young gentleman in spite of himself. He thought over the conversation very often afterwards.

At mess that night Pulfington Belper was radiant and elated. It was Monday night, and for the first time the good order of the

cantonments rested with him. Somebody happened to grumble about the patrol-duty ordered by the Brigadier.

‘Ah, it won’t be for long now!’ said the Major, complacently. ‘When the Brigadier sees that it has all stopped, as it has now, he’ll take off the patrol, depend upon it!’ At eleven o’clock, when our friend buckled on his sword to march off with the patrol, he remarked for the first time that Hodges and Simpkin and one or two others had not dined at mess.

‘They’re at the 33rd. There’s a public night there. Take care of them, Major!’

‘Nonsense!’ and the Major left the mess.

The plan of operations adopted by the present field-officer of the week was very simple. He formed his body of Sepoys into column, and marched up and down in front of the Brigadier’s gates with his entire forces. The feeling that it was beneath his dignity to command a smaller body had much to do with this arrangement. He walked on foot likewise. He remembered that he was a famous

pedestrian, and would not, I think, have been sorry of an opportunity of showing his prowess in that line.

For the first half-hour everything was quite quiet.

‘I told you so!’ said the Major to his senior subaltern, Mr Walker of the 33rd. ‘It’s a mere matter of form, hey!’

But as the Major uttered these words he looked towards the gates, which his detachment was again approaching, and thought he saw two figures in white near them. He took off and wiped his spectacles. Yes, there sure enough were two white figures, and dull sounds as of hammering likewise reached him. There was no doubt upon the matter. As he approached he saw with astonishment and consternation two unknown forms dealing vigorous blows to the sacred portals, and oddly enough, they allowed him to approach very close indeed before they seemed the least affected by his presence. They then suddenly darted away and ran leisurely along the road a short distance a-head of him.

This was too much for the Major's patience. The noted pedestrian and the responsible field-officer were both tried beyond endurance. Confident in his powers, our old friend at once started off in pursuit, and gave to his detachment the command to 'double,' and as he forgot all about the Sepoys the next minute, and got a considerable way a-head, in his eagerness to catch the saucy gate-lifters, the appearance of his blown detachment trotting along in great disorder soon presented a very curious effect. Mr Walker, the senior subaltern, had no orders to halt them, and so felt compelled to keep doubling along.

The Major was running in his well-known manner, but still he did not near the fugitives very fast. He came near enough to perceive that they wore white flowing garments like natives, but was never able to get near enough to learn more. They appeared good runners too, else how could they baffle all the efforts of so noted a pedestrian? After a while the Major began to find that racing in uniform immediately after dinner is a trying exercise.

He was forced to give in, and he was sometime before he was overtaken by his breathless and disorganized detachment. He led it back not over-well pleased with the result of the pursuit.

When he reached the Brigadier's house he was quite astonished at what had occurred in his absence. The massive brick gate-posts were levelled, and the substantial gates had entirely disappeared. The native orderly on duty in the compound said that he was forcibly held by two *Sahibs* whilst eight other *Sahibs* worked away with crow-bars and axes.

‘Who were they? What were their names?’ inquired Major Pulfington Belper with bustling energy.

‘I could not see! Their faces were covered, and they were dressed like Ayahs!’

The poor Major was utterly discomfited, but his consternation was, if anything, increased on reaching his own bungalow. In the centre of the compound he saw the missing gates; and a heap of his own muslin, his crow-bars, his axes, his mallets were strewn

around. I don't know if the sensitive Major Pulfington Belper or the over-irascible Brigadier felt the outrage the most deeply, but I think that Brigade Major Balderson reaped the greatest amount of practical inconvenience from the event. The number of insults, and bottles of 'sparkling Himalayan Burton,' which he was compelled to swallow during the Brigadier's frenzy, very nearly drove that most patient of men beyond the bounds of endurance.

Poor Major Pulfington Belper's troubles were by no means over. In a short time the papers got hold of the matter. The Indian press, like the provincial English press, is compelled to open its columns to local gossip, in the absence of topics of more serious interest. It is a much-abused institution. All ranks abuse it, and all write in it, from the Lieut.-Governor, who explains the ins and outs of his patronage squabble with the private secretary, to the Ensign who throws into jingling metre the sententious instructions of the Commander-in-chief concerning his aide-de-

camp's duty at tiffin. It was strongly suspected that an Ensign was at the bottom of the Major's new woes. One morning when that field-officer rushed over to mess for a cup of coffee, he found half Barrackpore there assembled.

‘Here he is!’

‘Do you know if they’ve found the “culprit” yet, Major?’

‘They say he’s got a brazen face, Major.’

‘What a shame to hint such a thing of our friend.’

‘I think the Major, on the contrary, has got a very pleasing face.’

Such were the enigmatical remarks that utterly bewildered our worthy friend, until two newspaper articles were handed to him. He thought the first the most atrocious and abominable article he had ever seen; that is, until he read the second.

Article No. 1. (From the ‘*Moffusilite*.’)

THE BRIGADIER AND THE AYAHs.

‘The great military station of Barrack-

pore has just been disturbed by an occurrence of a very unusual character. An outbreak has taken place within sixteen miles of the seat of government of India. A number of Ayahs rose up into open revolt last Monday, and laid siege to the very gates of the officer commanding the station. It is believed that but for the prompt arrival of a large body of troops, under the command of an alert officer, Major Pulfington Belper, they would have even succeeded in securing the person of the Brigadier himself.

‘Now we must confess all this is very mysterious, and people are already indulging in the wildest of speculations. They ask what is the meaning of this new “Revolt of the Harem?” Upon an extensive survey of the political horizon we reply that we cannot think it means much. The Czar of Russia would scarcely select such agents for the furtherance of his insidious designs upon Afghanistan; and what could the Shah of Persia hope to gain by enlisting in his interest the domestic servants of a few obscure English

ladies? The latter wily Asiatic might, it is true, choose such a vehicle for satire on the feebleness of our present rulers, were it not notorious that the present Indian administration belongs almost exclusively to a nationality much more famous for its appreciation of the sweets of office than the delicacies of subtle wit. The present Governor-General, like Louis XI. of France, has quite a superstition about surrounding his head with puppets and manikins and his person with Scotchmen.

‘Also we think that it must be conceded at once that misguided religious feeling had nothing to do with the fury of the female insurgents. The fair sex is the sex most prone to religious frenzy in all countries, but the class from which Ayahs are selected has never been much noted for devotional enthusiasm. On the whole, we are inclined to watch the movement with attention, but we must wait patiently for further indications before we can hazard any opinions regarding its tendency and object. Rebecca is an eastern lady, no

doubt, but the eastern Rebecca has never been in the habit of smashing gates.

‘One feature, perhaps the most significant of all, remains yet to be touched on. The Bengal subaltern has long been used to call his Brigadier an “old woman!” Such a phrase may no doubt mean that the officer in question, though still possessed of many amiable qualities, has lost much of the physical energy necessary to active military life. We believe that the officer commanding the Barrackpore Brigade is deservedly popular on account of his gentle manners and conciliatory disposition. But a very delicate question suddenly suggests itself. We cannot certainly shut our eyes to the fact that the animosity of aged females is seldom directed against one of a *different sex*. Again, we are forced to bear in mind that *jealousy* is amongst the strongest of Asiatic evil passions. The strange frenzy of these Indian females increases in mystery and significance the more it is looked into. It would be a funny result if the wild acts of these crazy handmaidens

should throw unexpected light on the sex of Barrackpore Brigadiers.'

Article No. 2. (From the '*Covenanted Civilian*.')

MORE PRACTICAL JOKING IN THE ARMY.

'We had hoped that we had heard the last of practical joking amongst grown-up soldiers. To paint a brother cornet's nose as he lies asleep, and to cut off the tail of his horse, are acts which are thought to possess very little humour even by school-boys. It is fortunate that, on the whole, India has been more exempt from these frivolous practices than other portions of the British dominions. On the other hand, in military cantonments in Bengal practical joking has attained a meaningless imbecility which defies rivalry. This silly practice of pulling down gates, from whatever cause it originated, is revived again and again; and, when the act is committed against an officer in command, it amounts to a grave offence nearly akin to mutiny. An army is an institution in which a due sub-

ordination of parts is the keystone of the arch which furnishes strength and cohesion to the entire fabric. Take away the respect and deference which soldiers owe their superiors and a disciplined army becomes at once a mere mob—in the words of Sir Charles Napier, “dangerous to its friends and innocuous to its enemies.”

‘These remarks are called forth by some practical joking which has recently occurred at Barrackpore. Two nights ago some officers in the disguise of Ayahs destroyed the gates of Brigadier Dewsnap, the commandant of the station. Now we think that this offence is very heinous, and ought to be visited with condign punishment. We cannot but believe that there must be some inherent vice in our military system if the military authorities fail to discover the authors of this bold outrage. Offences of a similar gravity never escape detection when subjected to the scrutiny of our excellent Civil Administration. The robber or the burglar who lifts his hands

at mid-night finds that the absence of direct evidence goes a very little way to screen him. Slowly and surely the irresistible links of a chain of circumstantial evidence circumvents and binds him fast. Now we think such a chain might be forged in this case, and we think it due to the community that this should be done speedily.

‘Heavy brick gate-posts cannot be destroyed without powerful implements, and no one can have such in his possession without the fact being known. Is it a fact, then, that anybody had a collection of mallets and crow-bars? Then, again, traces of the disguise selected by the offenders might also, we think, be easily discovered. So much muslin could not have been purchased quite in secret. Was any one known to possess any large quantity of muslin before the outrage was committed, or to have made any extensive purchase of that article? These are questions which should be speedily solved.

‘Lastly, we do not hear that the missing

gates have been discovered. This culminating evidence should be supplied without loss of time.

‘ Amongst people on the spot the finger of suspicion must already point pretty clearly in some direction. If all these considerations are promptly attended to, we make no doubt that the culprit cannot long escape detection, under whatever disguise he may shield his brazen face.’

CHAPTER VI.

A SECRETARY OF STATE.

MR PALMER BROWN occupied a set of chambers in the United Service Club. These consisted of a large sitting-room, a large bedroom, and a very comfortable bath-room. The sitting-room commanded a fine view of the *Maidan* and the river.

To-day is a native holiday, and Mr Palmer Brown is seated in a very comfortable arm-chair enjoying the 'Friend of India.' If you observe, his position even in solitude is not undignified. He does not place one leg over the arm of his chair, and the other in the middle of his writing table, or adopt any other of the lazy attitudes of tired gentlemen in a relaxing climate. Like all small, fat gentlemen, Mr Palmer Brown is neat and

prim. His dress is neat and prim. His room is neatly arranged. A handsome book is at each corner of the large table, and a vase in the centre. Four engravings are on the walls, one of the Governor-General, one of Lord William Bentinck. Opposite each gentleman is a lady, each with regular features and insipid expression. These ladies have no connection with Indian Governors-General, but are fancy portraits which attracted Mr Palmer Brown when hanging up in the show-rooms of Messrs Wilson & Co.

Mr Palmer Brown's library is well selected, and India by no means monopolizes it. Amongst the volumes are several sentimental poems and novels, which Mr Palmer Brown delights to lend to his lady friends. The volumes are all handsomely bound. Like Joseph Surface, Mr Palmer Brown is a 'coxcomb in books.'

But this morning he is thoughtful, for, in point of fact, he is in love. If any one think that the Calcutta Secretary is incapable of anything worthy of the name, he is mistaken.

Once Mr Palmer Brown was wildly in love, and this love he now thinks he has again revived for that lady's counterpart, Miss Sophy Brabazon. But a man over forty, and a man under thirty, view matters of sentiment in a different light. He believes he loves the young lady, and would like nothing better than to marry her; but, then, what he calls 'duty' has now also to be considered. He feels that he possesses great talents as a 'diplomatist' and a public man, and that these were not given to him to be thrown away.

Before Miss Brabazon's arrival, this is how matters stood. Mr Palmer Brown, who held a subordinate position quite unworthy of his talents, had fixed his eyes upon Emma, third daughter of Mr Windus; considering that lady in two lights, first as a desirable help-mate, and, secondly, as a good stepping-stone in his profession, through the interest of her father. He played his cards so well with the lady's parents, that in a short time he was advanced to the coveted Secretariat,

but his appointment was only an acting appointment. I may mention that by way of having two strings to his bow, he had also flirted, though in a less marked manner, with the Prettijohn interest, and with Miss Wotherspoon.

But now that the brilliant Miss Sophy Brabazon has completely eclipsed the charms of Miss Wotherspoon and Miss Emma Windus, the situation has become much more complicated. It is to be observed (at least, such is his impression), that Mr and Mrs Windus expect that he will propose to one of their daughters. Certainly, if Mr Palmer Brown were to become engaged to some other lady, Mr Windus would probably find some other candidate for the permanent Secretary's appointment. To balance this, if Mr Liversege became Resident at the Court of His Highness the Nawaub of Nawaubgunge, he would of course be able to nominate Mr Palmer Brown Secretary to the Residency, and the same remark applies to the rival candidate, Mr Wotherspoon. And to say

the truth, Mr Palmer Brown had always fancied that his talents lay in the diplomatic, or, in Indian phrase, the 'political' line. In Calcutta, advancement was slow and uncertain, but the merits of a 'political' are patent to all the world, and it would go hard if he then failed, with his great talents, to secure the very highest advancement. Even Nawaubgunge could not be held by Mr Liversege very long, as he was already entitled to his retiring pension.

Thus of all the Calcutta officials who have been thrown into a state of fever by the vacancy at Nawaubgunge, Mr Palmer Brown's situation is by far the most exciting. If the Governor-General would only put an end to this aggravating suspense, how delighted he would be. He is unable to consult his feelings, and make great love to Miss Brabazon; he is unable to make great love to Miss Wotherspoon; also, he feels how perilous it is either to dally too long with the Windus family, or to throw them over too soon. All that he can settle this morning in his easy-

chair is this, that his situation has become so very delicate, that it requires diplomatic tact of the very first order to get completely master of it.

A black servant dressed in Mr Palmer Brown's livery, announces *Wulteen Sahib* and *Chuffin Chaffeen Sahib*. Into these forms had the names of Messrs Chiffney Chaffney and Welter been already modified by the natives.

Now Mr Palmer Brown hated Mr Chiffney Chaffney, who was possessed of an effrontery and a ready wit, which were sometimes most obnoxious to the dignity of the great man when he visited the Club. He thought he should like an opportunity of giving the young man a good setting down.

'Take a seat, gentlemen!' he blandly said when they entered, adopting something of the manner of the Principal of Haileybury trying to be kind to two very young collegians. And after a few commonplaces on the weather, he seemed resolved that the conversation should be purely catechetical, and asked them

many questions about their studies in a patronizing manner.

Mr Chiffney Chaffney answered all these questions very good-humouredly, and very frankly. He was a young gentleman who was always very frank and never abashed.

‘And when do you think that you shall take up law? I hope you are diligently studying law, Mr Chiffney Chaffney.’

‘I can’t say I am, Mr Palmer Brown, just at present. I’m waiting till the Covenanted Handicap is run.’

‘The Covenanted Handicap! Dear me! You see, I know so little of races; and, between you and me, I’d recommend you gentlemen to know as little. Government House does not approve of them. But I thought the Calcutta races were over.’

The two gentlemen burst out into a hearty laugh, or rather a school-boy giggle, which they tried to suppress.

‘Mr Chiffney Chaffney means the “Elegant Entangler!”’ explained Mr Welter.

‘The “Elegant Entangler!”’

‘Yes, old Pulfington Belper—I mean Major Pulfington Belper—has given that name to Miss Sophy Brabazon. She’s the Covenanted Handicap!’

‘Yes, the odds are,—Three to one on the bay thoroughbred Chiffney Chaffney. Two hundred to one against the brown cart-horse Welter, much out of condition (taken freely).’

‘Oh, indeed!’ said Mr Palmer Brown, with a marked sense of injured dignity. He by no means relished the turn the conversation had taken. It was difficult to draw the line at which the conversation of inferiors in the presence of their superiors became decidedly unbecoming and familiar, but he thought that line reached when a Calcutta Secretary, however inferentially, was described as a horse entered for a race, and competing with brown cart-horses for an ‘Elegant Entangler.’

‘I’ll tell you what, gentlemen,’ he said very curtly and gravely, ‘you had better take my advice, and think only of your

studies just now. You can think of marriage and such things by-and-by.'

'Yes, but the Calcutta matrons won't let us. The plans they have laid to entrap my esteemed and fat friend here, for instance, have been something marvellous.'

Fat friend! The rotund official opened his eyes wide with astonishment. Such words even about another, in his presence, were indeed worthy of wonder.

The native servant here came in and announced that a native of rank wished to visit Mr Palmer Brown, and presently in walked Fuzl Ali, the Head Vakeel of His Highness the Nawaub of Nawaubgunge. Mr Palmer Brown was delighted. He did not know how to get rid of his young brother-civilians whose visit was becoming embarrassing.

The native of rank made a profound and graceful obeisance to Mr Palmer Brown, another to Mr Welter, and another to Mr Chiffney Chaffney, which that gentleman returned by a burlesque act of imitation.

‘What Judge Sahib is this?’ said the native, indicating Mr Welter with marked respect. Mr Welter’s whiskers were beyond his years, and natives always associate high-rank and fat.

Mr Palmer Brown now began to talk Hindustanee very rapidly, taking care to employ as many high-flown Persian words as he could well bring in, knowing that the civilians would be puzzled at any rate by them. He thought that a few minutes of such conversation would tire them out, and that they would then go away. In this he was quite mistaken, for chancing to look in their direction he found they had pulled out their betting-books and were diligently entering a small wager. Mr Chiffney Chaffney had bet five gold mohurs that the stranger was a Scinde Emir, and so they had determined to sit out the visit of the native gentleman to decide the bet.

The subject of the conversation between the Secretary and the Vakeel was this. The native reminded Mr Palmer Brown that he had seen him in former times at Nawaubgunge.

He explained that he had been sent up on a special mission by His Highness the Nawaub, about a disputed Jaghire, the Jaghire of Jamnugger. Fuzl Ali stated that the Nawaub had heard of the urbanity, talent, influence, compassion, and religious zeal of Mr Palmer Brown, and begged him to persuade the Governor-General, and the *Company Bahador*, and the *Badshazadi* on the throne of England, to remedy the grievance complained of by the Nawaub. Every native of India has a grievance, and this question of the Jaghire of Jamnugger was the especial grievance of His Highness the Nawaub of Nawaubgunge.

Mr Palmer Brown in reply displayed a great deal of that compassion and urbanity for which he was so noted at the Nawaub's Court. He said the Government were bestowing every attention to the Nawaub's claim, and that His Highness might rely upon the question being treated in the most liberal spirit, that the Government of India had for its chief object the happiness, contentment, and prosperity of the natives of India, and

ruled India entirely in the interest of the Indians. Mr Palmer Brown, I may remark, had never before heard of the existence of this particular Jaghire, but was he not now assured of the fact by competent authority ! So as the mouth-piece of Government he felt himself quite justified in saying that they would settle the question with all liberality.

‘I am sorry to have neglected you two gentlemen!’ said Mr Palmer Brown, very ungraciously apologizing. ‘This is a native of rank come up to Calcutta upon a matter of the highest importance. I was obliged to talk Hindustanee, and if you had been as steady at your studies as you ought to have been, you would have understood what we said. He does not understand English!’

Here the native chimed in, in a way that did not quite please the Calcutta Secretary.

‘Oh yes, *Hazoor* ! I do know English quite thoroughly well, your respectful Worship. I did learn it in by-gone years with the *Sahib Logur*.’ Mr Palmer Brown was not aware

that Fuzl Ali was once a clerk in a Kutcherry at Nawaubgunge.

Mr Chiffney Chaffney now began to converse with the native with much easy familiarity, too much, in the opinion of Mr Palmer Brown. Amongst other questions, he asked him if he had yet dined with the Governor-General.

‘Oh, no, Sahib, we native black men never have the great honour of dining with European gentlemen Sahibs. Your most obedient servant is Mussulman, black man, and does not eat the Soor, the dirty beast pig.’

‘The dirty beast pig!’ said Mr Welter.

‘Yes,’ and the native called Mr Welter something which sounded like ‘*Garribundeniwaj*.’

‘Bet you five gold mohurs!’ whispered Mr Chiffney Chaffney, ‘you don’t know what ‘*Garribundeniwaj*!’ means.’

‘I dare say you will!’ whispered Mr Welter. ‘I don’t mind saying the same to you!’

‘Done!’

‘Done!’

‘We’ll appeal to the Emir Sahib!’ Mr Chiffney Chaffney, for want of a better name, had all along called him the ‘Emir Sahib.’ And now he asked him if *garri* was not a corruption of *ghurib* (humble), *Niwaḥ* (Nawaub), and if ‘*bunder*’ had not two meanings, ‘slaves’ and ‘monkeys.’

‘In your case,’ resumed Mr Chiffney Chaffney to his friend, ‘it meant that you were the Nawaub of humble monkeys, the prince of baboons, the king of the jackanapes; you owe me five gold mohurs; ain’t I right, Emir Sahib?’

‘No, Sahib, we black men are not monkeys, we are only slaves. The Company Bahador is our protector and ruler, and all honours and power are in the hands of you English Sahibs.’

‘Gad!’ said Mr Chiffney Chaffney, ‘I wish they were. All honours and power are in the hands of the Scotch Sahibs, Emir Bahador!’

The native shortly went his way. He

had made use of many phrases needlessly humble for a native of his rank. If

‘Praise undeserved is satire in disguise,’

then many Asiatics must be great satirists. Indeed there is much more fine irony amongst them than many simple Englishmen think.

Mr Palmer Brown now broke out, human nature could restrain itself no longer.

‘Look here, you two gentlemen are in my house privately, not officially, and so I make every allowance, but I must give you both one piece of advice. If you want to get on in India you must pay more respect to your seniors, and more deference to the established authorities. If you were to carry your school-boy manners into the house of any other secretaries you would find it a different thing. You would indeed! Mind, I say all this for your good, you must not insult natives of rank, you must not echo the jeers of ensigns who are too stupid to obtain staff-advancement, you must never again, in the presence of a Government official, speak words in dis-

paragement of the mode in which the Governor-General is pleased to exercise his patronage, or I shall have to take notice of it. I don't believe that you seriously intended to exhibit any unprofessional disrespect. I am sorry I cannot devote to you any more of my time this morning, as Mr Liversege has just sent up his card, and is coming to see me on a matter of business. Good morning !'

And Mr Palmer Brown flattered himself that he had delivered a very temperate but very effective rebuke to Mr Chiffney Chaffney, which the latter would not easily forget. Mr Chiffney Chaffney did remember it, as we shall show, on a future occasion.

The Calcutta Secretary was very cordial and very civil to Mr Liversege, but there was some little embarrassment between them. Besides being flurried by the recent scene, Mr Palmer Brown, owing to the hesitation in Government-house on the matter of Nawaubgunge, hardly knows in what key to address the uncle of Miss Sophy Brabazon. That

uncle, on the other hand, has come to visit him, much against his own judgment and very much against his own will. He feels it is hardly becoming in an old man to pay court, as it were, to one much his junior, especially at a time when he has been made a candidate for a high office. Besides, he does not believe in Mr Palmer Brown so firmly as Mrs Liversege does ; in fact, that gentleman's enthusiasts are chiefly amongst the fair sex. Mr Liversege hardly likes the idea of the marriage which he sees his wife is scheming to bring about. Reserved men if they see things more tardily often see them more clearly than other people, and the Sudder-judge, in summing up, is forced to take into consideration previous character, and to recollect certain scandals in by-gone days regarding Mr Palmer Brown's treatment of his first wife. Besides, he has now become much attached to his niece, and shows his fondness in his own quaint way. He has not, it is true, been able to find any topic much more amusing to her than the measures of Government for the suppression

of the rite of *Suttee*, but his good feeling makes up for his want of practice in small talk. Nevertheless if Mr Liversege has private fancies he is now a married man, and these must give way to those of another. In a word, the weak and well-meaning Sudder-judge has no peace to-day until he has started off for the United Service Club in his Office-Brougham, a vehicle with two roofs, of a type not unusual in Calcutta.

‘No more intelligence received, I suppose, in reference to the vacant Residency at Nawaubgunge!’ said Mr Liversege somewhat curtly. When a man has something to say which he does not wish to say, the best way is of course to say it at once.

‘Little as yet, I may say nothing as yet!’ And Mr Palmer Brown nodded his head very mysteriously. If Bonaparte formed himself upon Cromwell, the Calcutta Statesman had evidently taken for his model the famous Lord Burleigh.

‘You know Mrs Liversege is very anxious for information, of course we all are.’

‘ Naturally so. How is Miss Sophy Brabazon ? ’

‘ Miss Sophy Brabazon is quite well,’ said Mr Liversege.

And the conversation hung fire a little. Mr Liversege is, as we all know, a taciturn man by nature, and to-day he is in a false position. As soon as he could conveniently manage it, he rose to go away. A moment or two before, a note had been handed to Mr Palmer Brown.

‘ Are you going already, Mr Liversege ? Good morning ! It is a pleasant day, and the cold weather this year has been more agreeable than usual. Those are sad freaks of those young officers at Barrackpore. I fear the discipline of the army is not quite what it should be. Well, perhaps I may as well tell it you—you can understand that—we—are obliged to use a little caution. If you promise, Mr Liversege, to be very careful not to compromise me in any way, I will tell you a secret, which at first I thought I ought to hold from you. Government-house has pronounced very strongly against Mr Wotherspoon. That case

of the opium *Gumashtas* at Budge-Budge has done for him. In fact, it's all up with the Prettijohn interest in *this* affair ! '

‘ Indeed ! ’ said Mr Liversege with a little astonishment. He had not given Mr Palmer Brown credit for so much information.

‘ Fact ! And so the Windus interest may win after all, may it not ? I hope the next time I see you to be able to congratulate the new Resident of Nawaubgunge, Mr Liversege. Good morning ! ’

We need not say that Mr Palmer Brown was not aware of all this at an earlier part of the day. That information had just been sent to him, in the innocence of her heart, by Mrs Windus. The skill with which he is conducting his affairs is not unworthy of praise. You know that under certain conditions he intends to marry Miss Emma Windus, so of course he is justified in making use of that young lady's mamma, at any rate until new conditions render that marriage impossible. So he has extorted a promise from Mrs Windus that when she hears anything about Nawaubgunge

she will let him know, and has further skillfully secured her partisanship by hinting that Government-house is really in favour of the Prettijohn champion.

‘You know, Mrs Windus,’ he said to her one day in his most agreeable manner, ‘a poor secretary is like one of these new competition civilians that are coming out to us. He is expected to know everything! And a man to keep up his importance must show that he is behind the scenes now and then.’

But if Mr Palmer Brown had told Mr Liversege in a plain matter-of-fact way that he had received the great news in a note whilst the two were conversing together, you see at once that the Calcutta Secretary would have thrown away an opportunity of effecting two important strokes of business. In the first place, he could not have impressed Mr Liversege with the vast amount of his private information and powers of keeping a secret. And, secondly, he would not have conferred the same obligation upon the uncle of his future wife. For Mr Palmer Brown now con-

siders his marriage a settled affair, and has already determined to propose to Miss Sophy at a picnic, which is to be given by Mrs Liversege at the Botanical Gardens.

‘Aha, I have your secret now.’ (You see the stage scene-shifters have been at work.)

‘And so you really love him!’

‘Dearest, you are so hasty. You know I scarcely know Mr Charles Simpkin!’

‘That is the very reason, love, why you should love him. When you know them very well you soon cease to love them. The males on this planet are a bad lot! Trust me!’

‘My dear, love is not a light thing.’

‘Yes, but I caught you copying out “The Holy River,” and just now you confessed.’ The copyist was Miss Motee, and the speaker Miss Sophy.

‘Dearest, I said more than I ought—more than I meant. Really, you know I have scarcely seen Mr Charles Simpkin half-a-dozen times, and am not likely to see him again.’

‘Oh yes, you are, at the Botanical picnic.

I'll order him to be very attentive to you. I've all the match-making instincts of our dear sex, strongly developed already.'

'What a little chatterbox you are.'

And Motee was silent and a little pensive. The offer of Sophy was a trifle patronizing perhaps, but she thought not of that. Was she pondering over the hard reflection that handsome lovers were not for her? This young maiden is by no means bad-looking. Her features are even more regular than Miss Sophy's. She is shorter than that young lady and plumper, and has tinier feet. Her eyes—(ye were blind to them, O ye Anglo-Indians, as ye always are to eyes!)—were very large, and expressed as much love as the most limpid, calm peepers could express; subdued, sweet, amiable, imperturbable, habitually, but capable of flashing with great fire at times. She has imagination and fancy, sound sense, and much shrewdness. She is self-sacrificing, and her disposition is sweetness itself. But she knows that the slight brown tint in her clear transparent skin, though a

beauty to a great painter, is a fatal blemish in India. It betrays that her blood is not without a certain mixture of that of Eastern races ; and perhaps it is this that makes her pensive just now.

‘Didn’t I manage that cleverly? We wanted a party that was at once large and amusing, and your mamma is afraid of a ball. The picnic will be much more fun, won’t it? You must enjoy yourself, I don’t know how much! You shall wear your new Dacca muslin with the tiny blue spots, and I shall wear the lavender barege I bought at the “Hall of all Nations” last Tuesday. It shall be done up in blue—no, in mauve—no, it shall be positively trimmed in blue.’ And Sophy was pensive in her turn.

‘It cannot signify which, my love. You will be thought to look equally well in either.’

‘It signifies much—an immensity,’ said Sophy, quickly, ‘but I can’t tell you all now. It may signify everything in the world ; but you’re a little child.’

Sophy always seemed to take it for granted when speaking to her friend that there was a full-grown intellect in the presence of that of a child. Perhaps there was.

‘Yes,’ she continued, after a short pause, ‘positively, I shall be trimmed with blue—sky blue.’

‘Perhaps that will be the best,’ said Motee vaguely.

‘What can you know about it, my little innocent! Tell me why do you love Charley Simpkin?’

‘There you are again. I tell you, dearest, you assume a great deal too much. What a question! I suppose when a person does love they know they do, but they can’t well give a reason for it.’

‘How we blush, dear! I think they should give a reason for it. I’ve a good mind to make half a revelation to you—only half a one—half a mystery, half a secret. I shall pay you off for your reserve towards me.’

‘My dear—’

‘Oh, I wish some one would advise me.

Not that I want advice. If a person likes another—loves them—they ought not to sacrifice their taste to the opinion of any one—they ought not to be guided by any one, I think.'

'Dearest, I think they can't be; in one sense our feelings and sympathies are beyond our control, but then of course, in another sense, we must defer to those who have the right—'

'My pet, you are so delightfully didactic!' then, after a pause, she resumed with sudden warmth, 'I won't be dictated to!'

'What do you mean, my dear?'

'I will talk to you on a subject which is rather a delicate one! Dearest, I have every reason to believe that my cousin Ada did not make Mr Palmer Brown a very good wife. There is a mystery, a reserve, whenever I approach the subject, but I am not to be deceived. Well, dear, if another of the family thinks that some atonement should be made to him—that the love he should have had from one shall at any rate be given to him by

another,—I think such motives ought not to be misunderstood.'

'Of course not, dear.'

'I don't speak of vulgar Indian tittle-tattle. My aunt is always talking of the splendid prospects of the wife of so rising a man as Mr Palmer Brown, so I know very well what the gossips will say. The fuss they make about funny privileges and rank out here is delightful, and it is still more delightful to have one's motives so thoroughly misunderstood, is it not? That alone makes the idea of a marriage fifty times more attractive.'

'Yes, love, but is that of itself a sufficient motive for marriage?' said Motee, and the question was a pregnant one.

'You are as bad as all the rest, and so is Mrs Vesey. She too has joined against me.'

'What does Mrs Vesey say on the subject? I am sure her advice will be good.'

'She does not say anything, that is what teases me. I can't help seeing that she is dead against any idea of the sort. You remember when Major Pulfington Belper spread

that foolish report, Mrs Vesey seemed so relieved when she found it was untrue. But when I asked her point blank if she knew anything against Mr Palmer Brown, she hesitated a great deal, and at last was compelled to admit that it was not in her power to make any grave charge against him.'

'Not in her power,—what did she mean by that?'

'I suppose that she would if she knew anything; what else could she mean?'

'But she is so kind-hearted.'

'Yes, she is, but because people are kind-hearted that's no reason they should dictate to others in the most serious matters. She has a prejudice against Mr Palmer Brown, who is a genuine man, hard-working, sterling, practical, useful. I don't see why Mrs Vesey should misunderstand him. More than that, I will not be dictated to—of that I am quite determined!'

Two days after this conversation the following letter was sent off from Calcutta.

MISS SOPHY BRABAZON TO MISS DORA STAIDLEIGH,
BUDLEIGH SALTERTON, DEVON.

‘ Per after Packet.

‘ *Chowringhee, Dec. 24th, 185—.*

‘ DEAREST DORMOUSE,—

‘ This mail I have something very important to consult you about. What a silly word “consult,” when one’s dear delightful counsellor is hundreds and hundreds of miles away. When your answer comes back it will be three months too late, it may be, for perhaps I am on the brink of a *most important step!* I will tell you exactly what has occurred. Three days ago my aunt, who is now so kind and whom I have *much undervalued*, took me off to the millinery department of Messrs Wilson’s “Hall of all Nations,” for these good people sell bonnets and stuff for dresses (really nice), gentlemen’s hats and great-coats, confectionery, jewelry, furniture, and everything else under the sun, all in the same shop. My aunt has settled to

have a grand picnic at the Botanical Gardens, a lovely spot a few miles down the Hooghly, and there can be no picnics in frightful old dresses, and so we went off to buy a new one. In the "Hall of all Nations" there happened to be two gentlemen who came up directly they saw me and my aunt. One was a fashionable officer in the Governor-General's Body Guard (which position is much prized out here). Captain Spink is not bad-looking, and is thought a *great deal* of by some of the young ladies. His dress is perfection; he and a Captain Lemesurier are thought the two best-drest men in Calcutta. Furthermore he does me a certain *marked* and distinguished honour, as you shall hear; but after all, you and I, dearest Dormouse, think of other qualities than those of a well-drest fashionable officer. The other you have already been told about. It was Mr Palmer Brown, who is considered *the* man in Calcutta. Governor-Generals are appointed by home interest, and Lieutenant-Governors because they are old; so you must not judge public men by present

actual rank. Well, to my story: there was one dress of all others which was *the dress* for the picnic, a lavender *barege*. All four of us settled that, but when it came to a question of trimmings there was a difference of opinion between the *civil* and *military authorities*; such differences, love, are common in India. The *civil* authorities were for a trimming of *sky-blue* (which, *entre nous*, I consider a mistake, and must have it very narrow in that colour, if I have it at all), the military were for *mauve*. I bought both colours, not to show too marked a preference, but Mr Palmer Brown, when he got an opportunity of saying a word to me alone,—and this I thought my aunt seemed rather anxious to furnish him with, for she asked the Body Guard Captain to give her his arm, and carried him off to show her a very handsome bracelet which he had unadvisedly extolled five minutes before;—when Mr Palmer Brown got me a little apart from the rest he said to me in an unusually marked manner, “I hope, Miss Brabazon, you will come to the picnic with my colours, I shall wear *yours*, in that

case. Do come, and then I shall know that you are not deserting our service. I am more serious and more interested in the matter than you perhaps think." I think the Captain must have heard this, for he found an opportunity of saying almost the very same thing to me, and pleaded of course in the *Body Guard interest*, which was very rude of him, was it not?—he has a bad manner even when most tender. It seemed as if he said, "This sort of thing has gone on long enough, and you must decide!" Cool, because I have not taken him up much; I have a little. Coquetry is now my profession, so it is no use your sending me out any lectures upon the subject. I shall not be sorry if he does march off. Oddly enough out here in the *best circles* the military are not *thought much* of by young ladies. There is a Captain and Mrs Langton of Charley Simpkin's regiment. They called on my aunt last week, and I asked her to get them to stop tiffin, as they were very kind to me at Barrackpore. She is *really ladylike*, and I like her very much. Several other

great people were there, and they were not only neglectful but positively rude to the lady. I was quite sorry to see it, as these distinctions are quite wrong.

‘ Well, dearest, you see I have to decide upon the *mauve* and the *sky-blue*, and it is really a grave question, for both are thoroughly in earnest. I think I must settle upon *sky-blue*; people here are so detracting, that even Mrs Vesey refuses to see the full merits of a man whose character seems simple enough, with many of its chief excellencies quite on the surface. The key-note of his character is *truth*; he is solid, masculine, clever, hard-working, and determined to succeed. I think him handsome, though many people might not do so. He is one of those sturdy genuine characters in which some of the *best* novelists of the day now detect the true heroic.

“ Such were a man for whom a woman’s heart
Should beat with conscious truth while he exists,
And break when he expires.”

‘ Ah, dearest, it is a sad thought that

people in this world are so depreciated and so misunderstood.

‘Yours, &c.’

In her letter as in her conversation Miss Sophy at the present moment seems strangely argumentative and eager for a reason for the love that is in her.

Is she finding her idol an unsightly image at best, which no amount of gilding can render more than a dull, cold, clumsy lump of clay—and which moreover is very much ‘too large in the waist?’

CHAPTER VII.

THE MOUSETRAP.

TO-NIGHT there is a 'public night' at the mess of the 44th Nowgong Native Infantry. A 'public night' is a night on which guests are invited, and the dinner is on a grander scale than on ordinary nights. The regimental plate is laid out, and the band plays after the cloth has been removed. To-night the preparations are on a very grand scale indeed, as Major Pulfington Belper has taken it into his head to invite a large number of guests. He has sent an invitation to Mr Palmer Brown, but that gentleman is unfortunately engaged. Unable to obtain so distinguished a leader to his little circle of guests, he has done the next best thing, and obtained a Captain of the Body Guard, and an A. D. C. to the Governor-General, a com-

bination of importance which almost rivals that of a civilian in the Secretariat. Five young civilians have accepted his polite invitation, Messrs Helter, Pelter, Welter, Skelter, and Mr Chiffney Chaffney. The Military leaders of Calcutta fashion are not aware, it is true, that they are to be brought into such close contact with the leaders of Civil fashion, and Major Pulfington Belper in offering his hospitality to Captains Lemesurier and Spink is under an impression that he has done something highly gratifying to those two persons of consideration. He does not attach weight to the little unpleasantness which occurred between the two parties.

‘Ha! aw! I believe I am going to dine with the *Dars!*’ said Captain Lemesurier to his faithful friend.

‘The *Dars!* I don’t understand you. I thought you had accepted the invitation of that foolish old Major Pulfington Belper.’

‘So I have, my dear fellow, and I’m going to dine with the *Dars!*’

‘I am quite in the dark as to your mean-

ing, Lemesurier!’ said Captain Spink, curtly. People in love are generally irritable.

‘Why, I’m going to dine with what Guffaw of ours always calls the *Dars*! The Havildars, Jemadars, Soobahdars—that sort of thing. Native officers, my dear fellow!’ Captain Lemesurier, like the great Mr Dundas, was in the habit of drawing upon his memory for his wit.

‘I have again to remind you, Captain Lemesurier, that the Governor-General’s Body Guard is composed entirely of native troops, and though you may be pleased to look down on the officers commanding the native troops of the Company, still to say such things in the presence of one of their officers is not civil. Besides, you are perhaps not aware that the Body Guard take the right of the line, and the *pas* of any Dragoon regiment in the English army.’

‘My dear fellow, you always bweak out. I had entirely forgotten the circumstance to which you allude!’ It is true that Captain Lemesurier had been reminded of the cir-

cumstance, on an average, about ten times a week for the last two months, but perhaps on some points his memory was defective.

‘ Well, I’m sure I tell you often enough ! ’ said Captain Spink with some simplicity.

‘ Besides, my dear fellow, cavalry and infantry are two different things ; I’m alluding to the “ N. I’s.” ’

Another point of debate had recently arisen between Captain Damon and Captain Pythias—the insubordinate conduct of the Barrackpore subalterns. For four days Captain Damon had used this text to preach upon the want of discipline of the officers of the Company. On the fifth day it was whispered about that the officers of the 42nd Loyal Lincoln Greens in the fort, had carried home their Major at three in the morning in correct funeral procession, with the band playing the ‘ Dead March.’ This stopped Captain Damon’s sermons for some little time.

Charley Simpkin has also some friends coming to dine with him. He and Ensigns

Short, Sharp, Hodges, and Griffinhoof, have been much together for the last two days. And this morning they have been detected whispering in corners more than once. A similar phenomenon was observed on the day when the Brigadier's strong portals were demolished.

That event has well nigh 'blown over,' as far as the Brigadier is concerned. The word 'furious' hardly describes the state of detonating, red-hot, apoplectic anger into which Brigadier Dewsnap was plunged for several days after that event. He stormed, he swore, he threatened to bring all the Colonels of regiments to court-martial, and to do a number of other things equally wild. His faithful Brigade Major during all this time was constantly watching over him. He soothed, he comforted, he drank his 'sparkling Himalayan Burton,' he skipped about with large General Order-Books, and was ever ready with chapter and verse to show the technical difficulties of each of the Brigadier's wild schemes of revenge. He bravely faced the

rolling fire of oaths and sarcasms, emptying the storm cloud of its electricity, and heedless of the flash and the thunder. He worked harder than ever with trowel and pick, and when the gate-posts were re-built more firmly than before, and another hundred Sepoys were added to the Sepoy Guard, the Brigadier's 'insensate, huge, gigantic anger' began a little to abate.

But Major Pulfington Belper is already at the mess to receive his guests. Sherry and bitters are in the ante-room where they are expected. Other officers all in bright scarlet shell-jackets are also there, and the Major, who has a little puerile vanity in his composition, is rather proud of some of the guests who are coming to dine with him. Colonel Sandboy dines at the mess to-night. In spite of the unfavourable impression he created in the mind of Ensign Simpkin, this officer is not without merit. In India every one is very fat or very thin, and the Colonel is a stout, jovial, good-humoured old gentleman, who evidently relishes Bass's bitter

beer as it foams through his moustaches, grizzled as those moustaches are with many marches and battles. He has the reputation of being a good officer, and was away at Fort William on court-martial duty when the affair of the Brigadier's gates took place. He has privately warned his officers that nothing of the kind must occur again. Charley Simpkin and his friends are now sipping their sherry, and assuming the airs of the most dark conspirators. They do not seem to attend much to the Colonel's warning. A rush of buggies is heard outside, and the five young civilians enter radiant in white ties and glittering in shirt-studs. The last dinner-bugle has sounded, and the party are on the move before Captains Lemesurier and Spink arrive. They salute the young civilians very haughtily indeed, and are not over cordial even to their host. The apparition of the civilians is a surprise to the military gentlemen. At one end of the table where Captain Ashleigh is vice-President, the Major's covers are laid. He sits with the five civilians

on one side and the Captains on the other. Opposite are Charley Simpkin and Messrs Short, Sharp, Hodges, and Griffinhoof.

During the early part of the dinner all were rather silent. Why does everybody speak in a whisper when his mouth is full of soup? But at the first pop of a champagne cork, Mr Chiffney Chaffney begins to fiz and sparkle.

‘Major!’

‘Yes, young man! Hey!’

‘I want you to tell me what all these mysterious articles in the papers refer to. What have they done to the Brigadier’s gates?’

‘Oh, you know it does not do to rip up old stories. There were some ill-advised frolics—which are now happily forgotten.’

‘Well, but I have the authority of a journal of weight to say that the matter is not yet forgotten, and that the authorities are on the track of the offender.’

‘Yes,’ joined in Mr Helter, ‘the finger

of suspicion already points him out. Those are the very words !’

‘Come, Major, you are on the spot, tell us in confidence, who does that refer to?’

‘The Brigadier is under an impression that it was an officer of the 44th!’ says Ensign Sharp of the 33rd across the table.

‘Yes, and they say he has discovered where the muslin was purchased,’ said Ensign Griffinhoof.

‘Muslin ! What muslin !’ innocently inquires Mr Chiffney Chaffney.

‘Why, they say the culprit had a brazen face which he shielded in muslin, disguising himself as an Ayah!’ explained Ensign Sharp.

‘Come, come, you young boys are very “cheeky.” Hey!’ The Major, ordinarily a purist in language, had adopted this mess phrase.

‘Yes, Major ! Chiffney Chaffney at Rugby always exhibited one Christian virtue. In the presence of a bigger boy he offered his *cheek* to the smiter.’ Charley Simpkin was

not fond of Mr Chiffney Chaffney, and so came to the Major's rescue, and completely turned the laugh for a moment.

‘On one point I’ll take my oath, Major, I saw you purchase a tremendous lot of muslin at the China bazar.’ Thus Mr Welter.

‘Fie, fie!’ said Mr Chiffney Chaffney. ‘A stranger hearing you would fancy you wished him to believe that our friend Major Pulfington Belper has got a brazen face!’

‘Come, come, young man, I shall have to call Simpkin to my aid again;’ and then a very happy thought seemed to strike the Major. ‘Begad, I shall begin to think that what he says is true, and that the more you’re threshed the more you fly out in chaff. Hey! Hey! Hey! That’s not bad. Hey!’ and he repeated it, as he always did his best jokes, like a preacher his text, to the other side of the congregation, ‘the more you’re threshed the more you fly out in chaff. Hey!’

‘But tell me one thing, Major,’ said Mr Helter; ‘have they supplied the culminating vidence, the missing gates?’

‘Or found the crowbars and axes?’ said Mr Welter.

‘And tell me another thing!’ said Mr Chiffney Chaffney.

‘What’s that?’

‘It is seriously stated in Calcutta that you are the author of the famous article about the sex of Barrackpore Brigadiers.’

‘Come, come, young man!’

‘Well, well, Major, it is a shame to laugh at you, and I think the affair has gone far enough.’

‘I think it has,’ said the poor Major, who didn’t like it.

‘I have always said it was not you.’

‘You were right for once. Hey!’

‘I have said my friend Major Pulfington Belper is too steady, too serious, too experienced an officer to do anything so indecorous.’

‘You are right again, young man.’

‘And yet, Major, a horrible thought strikes me.’

‘What?’

‘Those crowbars!’

‘Well!’

‘Have I not seen you use one in the 44th billiard-room?’

This sudden ingenious turning of the Major’s celebrated billiard joke against himself produced more mirth than any other sally, though latterly there had been loud guffaws at almost everything that had been said, so much so that Colonel Sandboy, who was quite at the other end of the table, suddenly roared out in a jolly voice,

‘Major Pulfington Belper, you are keeping all the fun at your end of the table; send down some of the jokes this way.’

Poor Major Pulfington Belper, I think he would have been quite willing to transfer a great deal of the recent jocularities, had he been so able. He felt, indeed, that he had made a brilliant rally with his splendid image about the threshing flail and the chaff. But on the whole, he felt nothing could be so ill-timed and unfortunate as the topic selected. What would Captain Spink think! What would Captain Lemesurier think! And did not these two

gentlemen actually represent the Governor-General. In the confused brain of our bewildered old friend it almost seemed as if the latter great functionary himself was in person hearing him accused of pulling down his superior's gates, and writing newspaper articles calling in question the sex of Barrackpore Brigadiers. In point of fact, the two Captains did not seem to pay much attention to him, but took their dinner in stately grandeur, confining their conversation to themselves, in spite of one or two efforts on the part of their host and of Captain Ashleigh to be civil to them. To speak more truly, the conversation was confined to Captain Lemesurier, and his remarks disparaging of the 'Dars' made for the especial benefit of his friend, Captain Spink, and in the interest of that rare thing, a true male friendship.

When the dinner was over, Captain Ashleigh called Charley into the ante-room.

'Now, look here, Simpkin, a report has got about that there is to be some more of that silly gate-lifting to-night ; if this report is true,

all I can say is, that some fellows are very imprudent, and very foolish.'

'Well, I am sure I don't know why you should accuse me!' broke out Charley Simpkin. He and his fellow-conspirators hoped that Ashleigh would have treated the matter like Major Winkworth.

'Nobody accuses you, my dear fellow,' said Captain Ashleigh, quietly.

'Yes, you do, or why speak to me on the subject?'

'I don't accuse you. It's not my business to accuse you. It's not my business to concern myself with anything that has occurred in the matter. But if anything occurs to-night, then it will be my business to concern myself about it.'

'Well, Captain Ashleigh, I must say that I don't see that you are in any way justified in speaking to me on the subject. Your picking me out does imply that you suspect me.'

'My dear fellow, it implies nothing of the kind. I don't say that I do suspect you; I don't say that I don't suspect you; but I say

this, that if you know any of the young fellows whom you think likely to attempt to carry off the Brigadier's gates to-night, just give them a hint that I am going to put a stop to it.'

'Oh, I'm to tell them you are going to put a stop to it,' said the sarcastic Ensign. 'Am I to inform them how you are going to put a stop to it?'

'Well, I don't know that I can tell you my plans,' said the Captain, simply, 'I don't know that I yet have any.'

What most irritated Charley Simpkin was the Captain's calmness. The most barbed of the young man's darts seemed to strike the breast of Captain Ashleigh's shell-jacket, and fall harmlessly down. Once or twice the Ensign had said to himself, Is he really the dull, passionless man I usually take him for, or is he something widely different? It almost, sometimes, seemed as if this humble Captain of Native Infantry had, by sheer hard drill, obtained as complete a control over his passions and emotions as he had over the fiery Asiatics who shouldered arms in his ranks.

‘I can tell you this much,’ resumed the Captain, ‘Havildar Zorawur Sing, the great wrestler of the regiment, is on guard at the Brigadier’s house, and though he has been cautioned to offer all possible respect to any one whom he can recognize as an officer, he will assuredly seize any Ayahs or people of that sort, and once in his grip you may be certain they won’t find it easy to get free.’

‘I don’t know why you should have taken such an affection for Brigadier Dewsnap, all of a sudden.’

‘My dear young man, that’s the mistake you fellows make. We don’t serve this Brigadier or that General, but the Company who pays us. Duty, whether agreeable or not, is still duty, and as such a most sacred thing!’

When Charley Simpkin rejoined the party, there was a council of war. The words of Captain Ashleigh had made an impression on him, and when repeated made an impression on them. One or two were for going on with the matter, in spite of every obstacle, but some,

on the other hand, wanted to give it up altogether.

‘I tell you what,’ said Mr Welter, who had been taking, if not too much, at least quite enough of the excellent mess Madeira, ‘I tell you what. This venerable party, old Brigadier Dewsnap, has nothing to do with us. We’ll pull down his venerable old gates!’

‘Yes, and pull Captain Ashleigh’s old nose into the bargain,’ said Mr Helter.

‘Yes, and then say it was old Pulfington Belper. A terrible gate-lifter that old Pulfington Belper!’ said Mr Chiffney Chaffney. We need not say that the Major had left his guests in charge of the younger officers, having an important match of billiards on hand.

After some discussion it was settled that the five civilians should be the actual agents in the business, the young military men acting as pickets, to give the alarm if necessary. Then if there was a strict inquiry next morning, they could enjoy the fun of the authorities being on the wrong scent. Before anything

further was done, some brandy and soda-water and fresh cheroots were suggested. They then repaired to the quarters of Charley Simpkin.

Here the weapons of the conspirators were collected, the crow-bars and axes, as before. Some black crape had also been provided, as Ensign Hodges had read that morning of a burglary in England where that precaution had been adopted. The civilians tried it on, but found that it prevented smoking, and was moreover rather hot after a good dinner. Overcoats and shooting jackets, which did not fit, were provided for them, and then the whole party started off.

The Brigadier's house was a corner house. Thus in case of alarm there were three roads open for flight, up and down the main road or off to the left round the corner. Twenty yards up the main road there was a fourth turning away to the right. That road led to a road parallel to the main road, along the line of captains' bungalows.

Mr Hodges took upon himself to 'post the pickets,' as he called it. Fifty yards up the

road and fifty yards down the road a young gentleman was stationed to give the alarm. Fifty yards down the road to the left a third young gentleman was stationed round the corner of the Brigadier's compound, and half way down the road which turned off to the right a fourth gentleman was posted. The last duty fell to our young friend, Mr Charles Simpkin.

The working party was now escorted to the scene of operations by Mr Hodges.

'Hulloa, there don't seem any Sepoys on the look-out,' said that officer. 'That's lucky.' The Sepoys indeed seemed far less alert than on a former occasion, within the memory of Mr Hodges. Soon Lieut. Sharp on his tattoo galloped up and said that all was right, and that the picket was drawn up in rear of the 33rd Mess-house, and if it came up the main road must be seen and announced long before it could reach the Brigadier's house. Mr Hodges now requested Mr Chiffney Chaffney and his friends to allow him and his brother officers to get quite out of sight before

they began. By this act Mr Hodges quieted his conscience, and was perfectly ready to swear that he had had no hand in the business.

‘And so this wicked old gentleman thinks that he’s to stick up gates, and no one’s to knock them down, does he?’ And Mr Welter administered a blow with a crow-bar, which made the masonry gate-posts ring.

‘He does not know what Samson is going to walk off with his gates to-night,’ said Mr Chiffney Chaffney.

And so the party commenced working with a will, enjoying their labour excessively, the only drawback being that they found it very warm work.

‘Could not you go and get some beer, Chiffney Chaffney,’ said the perspiring Welter, ‘and give that everlasting tongue of yours a little rest? You’re not doing any work besides.’

‘No, monster, that everlasting throat of yours has been flooded enough to-day. Beer deteriorates a man’s brains, and I’d strongly advise you to economize the little you have.’

At this moment a colossal Havildar came up to the gate from the inside of the *compound*, saluted the gentlemen, and then said very respectfully,

‘*Sahib Log*, you must not go on with this. It is against orders!’

‘Oh no!’ said Mr Chiffney Chaffney; ‘the Brigadier *Sahib* has sent us a private message that he wants these gates pulled down, as he intends to put up some much more pretty ones in their place.’

‘Whatever the *Huzoor* (person of rank) wishes, but Ashleigh Sahib ordered me to watch the gate, and to tell any of the *Sahib Log* that this work was against orders.’

‘But this fat, ugly Sahib here is Captain Ashleigh’s brother, who told him to knock the gate right down.’

‘Well, I can only obey orders!’ said the Havildar, and he walked away.

Meanwhile our young friend Charley Simpkin is watching at his post in the calm moonlight. He finds it rather cold, and has lit another cigar, and under the soothing in-

fluence of the most excellent Manilla tobacco, he begins to ponder upon the general affairs of the world, which world always sooner or later in his thoughts manages to contract itself into one of the world's daughters, Miss Sophy Brabazon. To rather an odd frame of mind is our young friend reduced by his passion for that young lady. To more than the usual share of youth's enthusiasm, Mr Charles Simpkin adds an intellect keen and analytical beyond his years. The first he has much pampered with poetry and romance, and the second he has sharpened with a smattering of philosophy, and a very extensive study of the most cynical and the most witty of the world's satirists and humourists. Thus, without altogether understanding his position, he has hitherto been living as it were in two worlds, whose confines have been kept unusually sharp and distinct—the ideal world of dreams and hope, and the real world of knaves and fools, funny shams, and ridiculous weaknesses.

Insensibly this enthusiasm and this analy-

sis have at last come into actual conflict on the subject of Mr Liversege's niece. The main idea of Mr Charles Simpkin's relation to Miss Sophy Brabazon he conceives to be this. He is a young soldier in love with the most beautiful, the most pure, the most witty, the most accomplished, the best-drest, best-mannered, and most loving of her sex. He is a crusader in Paynim lands bound to win his right to her by his sword and by his merit. He firmly believes that at the bottom of her heart she loves him, and that thus his dream will all be one day accomplished ; meanwhile he is bound by every law of chivalry and honour to trust her implicitly, in spite of all apparent evidence against her. Like a brave knight of old he must regard it all as the illusion of enchantment, and believe the voice of his soul before the teachings of his senses.

But when a young gentleman has cultivated analysis its voice will also make itself heard. I will do the present brave crusader the justice to say that any direct attack on Miss Sophy was religiously and conscientiously smothered in his

mind at its very birth. But then sometimes the voice of the soul would take the dangerous course of defending the lady love and thus suggest the attack. It was no doubt quite true that the young lady had temptations and tempters. Although she was thrown amongst dull, ridiculous, curry-eating fogies, still their pomps and vanities, and luxuries and glitter, were pretty nearly as substantial as the other pomps and vanities of the world. Then had she not a Mephistopheles (in dove-coloured satin), or perhaps something more terrible, a clever old woman, who went regularly to church, took the sacraments, repeated the responses, led an eminently respectable life, and was always at her ear preaching the most foul worship of Mammon, under the guise of religious duty?

Then, again, a man if he wants to marry at all in this world must marry a woman; and a woman is after all a woman — a thing of millinery and small vanities as well as of love and self-sacrifice; and the young crusader finding that analysis was suggesting

the portrait of woman as painted by Mr Alexander Pope or Monsieur Balzac rather than by Wordsworth or the Reverend Charles Kingsley, would abruptly suffocate the whole train of thought in clouds of smoke, as he did upon the present occasion.

In this manner Mr Charles Simpkin mused on life and love and a crusader's duty at a moment when he was helping to demolish the barriers of authority. The night was calm, and a monotonous wild chant with its accompaniment of shrill wailing Indian music came from the neighbouring *bazar*, where the glare of oil lamps lit up the little streamers which waved upon their frail bamboo masts to attract Moslem wassailers. Around, the cocoa-palms showed their dark outlines in the clear moonlight. Our young philosopher was having brought forcibly home to him the partial identity at once and vast difference between the two worlds, the world of hope and the world of fact, by the severe logical process which mortals call 'first love.'

By this time one of the brick gate-posts

was quite destroyed, thanks to the energy of Mr Welter. The crow-bars were about to be directed against the second gate-post when the party was once more interrupted. Ensign Hodges rushed in amongst them and shouted out,

‘Look out, you fellows, here’s the patrol coming up the main road; you’d better bolt!’

‘Shall we separate?’ said Mr Helter.

‘No, keep together!’ and away they all started up the road, all except Mr Helter.

For that gentleman thought that the safer plan was to rush at once round the corner to the left. He had not got ten yards, however, before he found himself confronted with Havildar Zorawur Sing with a guard of sixteen men drawn up right across the road.

‘It is Ashleigh Sahib’s orders that no one pass this way!’ said the Havildar saluting, and Mr Helter found himself caught in a trap.

The other gentlemen dashed up the road at a good pace, but they had not got thirty or

forty yards before they heard the tramp of armed men in their front.

‘Hulloa, confound it, what’s this? you said this infernal patrol of yours was coming up the road,’ said Mr Welter, who was a little puffed.

‘So it is!’ said Mr Hodges.

‘But here it seems to be coming down the road.’

‘So it does!’ said Mr Hodges.

‘Confound it all! That’s a bore! we’re in a fix; why didn’t those fellows give us warning?’

‘Stop,’ said Mr Hodges, ‘let’s double back and turn up the road to the right!’

The party did so.

‘Hooroosh, my boys! we’ve jockeyed the patrol, but it’s mighty warm work!’ said Mr Chiffney Chaffney.

This was the road on which Charley Simpkin was posted. Having come to the end of his meditations and his cheroots, he begun to find it dull work waiting. He yawned, and thought that if it had not been

for his promise to keep watch he would sneak off to bed. The idea of anybody taking such extreme precautions against the pipe-clayed Ashleigh seemed quite ridiculous.

At this moment he looked up and saw a column of Sepoys wheeling round the corner from the road which ran by the captains' bungalows, and the head of the column was coming straight up his road in the direction of the main road.

Charley Simpkin ran off as hard as he could run in the direction of the Brigadier's house, but soon he heard the clattering of a pony behind him, and a voice shouted out,

‘Look here! Stop, you fellow! Oh, it's you, Simpkin; well, look here, you're under arrest!’

‘What do you mean? I may walk on any road of the station I please, mayn't I? Why, it's Curzon; what do you mean?’

‘Well, all I can tell you is, that I have Ashleigh's orders to arrest anybody on this road, and so you're under arrest!’

‘Confound it, old fellow. Don't be a

sneak too. Let me off, perhaps some fellows may otherwise get into a scrape ! ’

‘ That’s all you seem to know about Ashleigh ; if I failed to execute one tittle of his orders it would be more than my commission’s worth. ’

At this moment a party of Sepoys entered the other end of the road, and five panting breathless gentlemen rushed up. They were a little in advance of the new column, and found their road barred in front by Mr Curzon’s detachment.

‘ Look here, you fellows, you’re all under arrest ! ’ shouted that officer in an authoritative voice.

‘ Nonsense, what do you mean ? there must be some mistake, ’ said Mr Welter.

‘ Who goes there ? ’ said Mr Hodges.

‘ Discuss unto me, art thou officer, or art thou base, common, and popular ? ’ Charley Simpkin, though angry, could not resist a quotation from his favourite author.

‘ Nobody can arrest Her Majesty’s House of Commons ! ’ said Mr Chiffney Chaffney.

‘ Seriously, you fellows are all under arrest,’ repeated Mr Curzon.

‘ But we don’t belong to the station. Nobody can arrest us. What do you mean ? ’

‘ I have the orders of the Field-officer of the week, and I know of nothing else.’

‘ But we’ve nothing to do with any Field-officer, or any day of the week. We have every right to be on this road. The law is on our side, you’ll get into a serious scrape.’

‘ I know of no law except the orders of the Field-officer of the week.’

At this moment Captain Ashleigh himself rode up. With him was Havildar Zorawur Sing. Also Mr Helter, the detachments having closed round that gentleman, and quite prevented his escape.

‘ Look here, Captain Ashleigh ! ’ shouted out Mr Charles Simpkin, ‘ I was on this road, and I believe I have every right to walk on this road, and I find myself arrested by your orders. On what charge, may I ask ? ’

Captain Ashleigh asked the Havildar if he

had seen Ensign Simpkin working at the Brigadier's gates.

‘No, Sahib!’ replied the Havildar.

‘Or Ensign Hodges?’

‘No, Sahib!’

‘Then, Hodges, you and Simpkin are released from arrest.’

‘But what I want to know is—,’ began our young friend, rather grandly, and he received a furtive kick on the shins from Mr Curzon.

‘What a d—d fool you are!’ said that gentleman, in a whisper.

‘What do you mean?’

‘Hold your tongue! Don’t you see, he has strained a point to let you off. You might have been tried.’

Meanwhile the civilians had commenced their attack, and wanted to know why they, being quite independent of all military authorities, had been forcibly detained on the public highway.

Captain Ashleigh again addressed the Havildar.

‘Do you see any of the gentlemen here whom you reported as in the act of breaking down the Brigadier Sahib’s gates?’

‘Yes, Sahib; besides this Sahib (Mr Helter), I saw those four other Sahibs there!’

‘Then, gentlemen, I am sorry to say that you must consider yourselves under arrest, and remain in the station until to-morrow morning!’

‘But you’ve no authority over us, we’re in the Bengal Civil Service,’ said Mr Helter.

‘I can’t discuss the question with you. My duty is to see that no one pulls down the Brigadier’s gates. Three hundred men are detached every night for the purpose of preventing it. You have been detected in the act. You must give me your word that you consider yourselves under arrest, and will all be forthcoming in the morning.’

‘We positively refuse to do anything of the sort!’ said the five young men, grandly.

‘But it is quite necessary!’

‘No! We refuse! Detain us at your peril.’

‘There’s no question of peril,’ said Captain Ashleigh, quietly. ‘I must obey my orders, which are, that the offenders, if officers, are to be placed under arrest, if “others,” they are to be confined in the Regimental Quarter-guard. I have given you your choice. Curzon, if these gentlemen still refuse you must take them off to the 44th Quarter-guard.’

And Captain Ashleigh rode away, and in a short time the five members of the Bengal Civil Service found themselves opposite a small brick building scarcely large enough for the kennel of a large Newfoundland dog.

‘Hulloa, we can’t stop here. We shall die, like the people in the Black-hole!’ said Mr Welter.

‘There’ll be one consolation: this confounded Ashleigh would be hanged, and so I hope would the confounded Brigadier.’

‘I say, you fellows,’ said Mr Curzon, ‘you’re great muffs. Excuse me for saying so. You’re in a much more serious scrape than you think, and by raising the question of authority, you make your act of to-night so

notorious, that let Government decide the general question how it may, you must be sent to the wall. If you stay here all night you completely prevent the matter from being hushed up.'

There was much truth in this, and in the end the young men gave the desired promise. The appearance of the Quarter-guard settled the matter. Perhaps Captain Ashleigh intended that it should so do.—I may mention, as the scene must shortly shift, that although the Brigadier was furious the next day, the matter was eventually hushed up, thanks to the exertions of Mr Vesey, and the question of the Brigadier's gates became eclipsed by a much more important one, for Miss Rosalind Voltaire, the actress, is coming to India from Australia, and Captain Beverley, the gifted amateur light comedian, has arranged that she shall make her *début* at Barrackpore in the popular play, *The Ironside*. Charley Simpkin (who came out as an actor on board ship) has been engaged for the part of *Lady Hawthorn*, but he would have preferred Captain

Beverley's part, the hero *Cloudesley*, a handsome and brave but somewhat sarcastic and moody gentleman, some of whose speeches 'found' the young officer at this period of his military career. He would very much have liked to declaim the following before Miss Sophy, in the handsome costume of the period of the First Charles,—

‘Folly is oftentimes sweetness in excess ;
Sweetness with wisdom are in Heaven alone.
Thus, were a woman wise as she is sweet,
Or a wise woman sweet as well as wise—
(If a wise woman ever walked the earth),
Then her true loyal heart would beat alone
To loyal heart responsive pulse to pulse,
And these in turn should parent loyal hearts
And starve up knavery—’

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WOMAN IN LAVENDER.

THIS afternoon is fixed for the great picnic to the Botanical Gardens. It is given by Mrs Liversege, to all Calcutta we might almost say. She feels that as Mr Liversege's appointment to Nawaubgunge is almost a certainty, it is a good occasion to do something. A ball is out of the question unless she chooses to drive her sister out of the house. But Mrs Throgmorton finds no objection against the picnic. On the subject of picnics she has no work of reference written by her great authority, the Rev. Eli Pellicrook. And a botanical picnic seems plainly removed from the category of mere vain pleasures.

‘I don’t think, Maria,’ she says at length to her sister, ‘I don’t think there is much harm in a botanical picnic.’

‘Harm, of course not ; why, the Lieutenant-Governor gave one six weeks ago.’

‘The young people can improve their minds, you know.’

‘Of course they can, Hannah, and read the long Latin labels on every bush, if they like. Besides, young people must amuse themselves, and when young people are looking for a home—’

‘I agree with you there, Maria ; a picnic holds out many more advantages than a ball, where the gentlemen, besides being very wicked, are very much out of breath. In a pretty retired walk a man is more collected.’

‘Yes, but he is more nervous, dear ; the music and the exercise give confidence !’

‘My love, that is taking a worldly view of the subject. When will you understand that the wisdom of this world is foolishness ? I tell you that at a quiet and serious tea party, where the gentlemen are sober and earnest and prayerful, there are more unions made up than at all the balls in the kingdom. Serious people are more thoroughly serious.’

‘Yes, dear,’ said Mrs Liversege, ‘it is well known that at Bible tea-parties there is more flirtation than anywhere else ; but in Calcutta, you know, where they are chiefly composed of half-caste converts, serious artillery Majors, and preaching Colonels’—

‘My dear, if the men are thoroughly good’—

‘Good men, no doubt, but we must think a little of position.’ And Mrs Liversege decided upon the picnic to the Botanical Gardens. Why was she so anxious to give the best opportunity to gentlemen to offer to young people position and a home?

The party is to meet at the Gardens at half-past three. They will come by water, so half the *dinghys*, pinnaces, and *bolios* are hired in consequence. I need not say that a native holiday is selected for the occasion. And a very great triumph indeed has been gained by the tact of Mrs Liversege. The Lieut.-Governor of the Sunderbunds is provided with a very magnificent official yacht to make his tours of inspection with becoming

state; water carriage being of course very necessary in that portion of the Indian empire. Through Mrs Windus, Mrs Liversege had obtained the loan of this, as they both feel that their recent triumph over the Prettijohn interest ought to be celebrated in a becoming manner. When I mention that Mr Windus's yacht was a golden vessel, modelled almost entirely upon the state barge of the Lord Mayor of London, and that it was so big that it had to be towed by a steam tug, the 'General Littler,' you can judge that it added great *éclat* to Mrs Liversege's picnic. She and her husband, Mrs Throgmorton and Motee, all went down in it, and so of course did Sophy in the most delicious lavender dress that ever was seen. And their party had received an unexpected addition. That morning Captain Ashleigh had been persuaded by Mr and Mrs Vesey to come with them into Calcutta, as they were going to see some new carriage-horses there for sale, and wanted his opinion. When in Calcutta he suddenly found himself at Mr

Liversege's without his being the least aware of the fact. And though Mrs Vesey had declined Mrs Liversege's invitation to the picnic, nevertheless, when she found herself thus caught in Calcutta, and in Mrs Liversege's house on the very morning of that entertainment, she found it impossible any longer to decline, and Captain Ashleigh was also compelled to take a passage on board the state yacht. Mr Palmer Brown was also to be of the party, but he had told them not to wait for him, as he had business that morning with Mr Windus which might detain him. The great Mr Windus himself proposed to come down by land with his family at a later hour.

I don't think Mrs Liversege was much grieved at the absence of Mr and Mrs Windus in the boat. When that brave vessel received its brilliant cargo, it presented a gallant appearance. I have only mentioned a few of the passengers; there were many others whose names have no interest in our story. As the yellow waters of the

Hooghly bubbled past the golden ribs of the gaudy craft, and twenty *Manghies* pulled ropes with loud screams and religious ejaculations, the new Admiral felt a pleasing elation as she watched the green lawns of Garden Reach, and their pretty villas. They passed many a stout Indiaman riding at anchor. They passed native boats with ragged and torn sails. They passed a Ganges steamer with its tiers of lofty cabins and Venetian sides. By-and-by the vessel shot across the river, and her head was turned towards a small *ghaut* on the other side. Green slopes of velvet turf came down to the stream's edge. Flowers of every hue, shape, and class, the rarest and most beautiful flowers in the East, shone bright in the strong sunlight. The stateliest of earth's trees rustled gently above, and threw their shade around. India is the Eden of the world, and this was the Eden of India.

But before the native sailors could reach the ghaut their progress was arrested by a tiny little *dinghy*. A dinghy is a humble craft some-

thing between the meanest of gondolas and the shabbiest of canoes. In this craft was a Major and an Ensign, and the former, to do him justice, seemed sincerely anxious to induce the ragged native boatmen to make way for the more imposing craft. But the stolid oarsmen pulled straight to the ghaut, and then clamoured loudly for *buksheesh*, equally heedless of the Field-officer's agitation and of the presence of the stately galley, whose passage they barred. That fabric seemed so imposing and enormous with its accompanying steamer which hissed and fumed, and the dinghy so very small and petty, that the contrast quite tickled the younger officer; but soon the Major could stand it no longer and hurried away, still pursued by his two dusky ragamuffins, with whom he appeared terribly irascible, as he stalked rapidly along.

Mr Palmer Brown was not a passenger on board the state-yacht. He did not arrive in time. Sophy was in wonderful spirits, and never looked so animated and so pretty before. Her aunt (the admiral before alluded to) was constantly at her side petting her and admir-

ing her dress, that is, when the admiral's attention was not taken up with the rest of her brave crew. Sophy for the first time in her life was not very cordial to kind Mrs Vesey, who thought that she once or twice observed a tone almost of defiance in the midst of the young lady's gaiety. To Motee, on the other hand, the vivacious beauty was most kind. She was always breaking away from this gentleman and that gentleman, to carry her some little message. And then she would suddenly sit by her and draw the more timid young lady into the whirl of the giddy conversation she was carrying on with three or four gentlemen at a time. Her dress is trimmed to-day with sky-blue, but the trimming is very narrow.

Captain Ashleigh was sitting by Mrs Vesey. Sophy tripped over more than once to speak to the lady, but she was a little stately towards the gentleman. He certainly must be the bear Charley described him, for he had never once called whilst she was at Mrs Vesey's house, and had never come to Calcutta. It was

absurd any young lady taking an interest in such a man. He was brave, no doubt, as Mrs Vesey said, but every officer was brave. He had been in many battles, but that was a mere question of luck. Sophy had heard a great deal about him from Mrs Vesey, and had taken some interest in him when she learned that his career, which had been one of immense promise for so young a man, had been suddenly clouded by a mysterious affair. The Captain had resigned a very important post, and ever after had done the plain duty of regimental officer. Sophy could obtain no more details from Mrs Vesey, who was as reserved on this point as she was on some others, but perhaps the mystery added its charm. But she felt now that she had only thrown away her sympathy on a very commonplace man, whose odd conversation had interested and piqued her a little at first. He must be treated like other commonplace men, and so finding him very frank and good-humoured every time she went to Mrs Vesey,

one trip she invaded her with the army of young civilians, and quite astonished that good lady with the spirit of her merriment. But the Captain seemed to take that and everything else she did as a matter of course. He seemed to know her better than anybody else, although he had only spoken to her once. A word, a look, would drive Charley Simpkin or Mr Palmer Brown into the sulks for a week, but the kindness of the Captain was quite aggravating. Positively when he offered to assist her down the plank, she rejected his assistance almost rudely. Mrs Vesey, who had gone down with him a minute before, was quite struck with her manner.

‘Has Captain Ashleigh offended you, dear? You seemed quite annoyed with him when he offered you his hand to help you down the plank.’

‘Offended me! Oh dear, no! But people in India seem to think ladies so terribly helpless. I don’t want assistance every time I put one foot before the other.’

‘But still the plank was long and insecure.’

‘Yes, but a bath this warm day would have been so delightful. The river looks so calm.’

‘You must not trust its looks, dear. The last time I was here, a sad affair occurred. A young lady fell in and was drowned.’

‘What ! could no gentleman jump in after her, and save her ?’

‘Several tried to, but she sunk and never rose again. In the Hooghly is a terrible under-current, though it looks so calm and slow. Once in that you seldom rise again. So many have been drowned in the Hooghly.’

‘How terrible ! It looks so sleepy and still.’

‘Are you irritated against Captain Ashleigh ? I thought you talked a little at him to-day.’

‘I ! Oh no. I like to tease everybody a little. You seem to have a great opinion of the Captain.’

‘He is one of Mr Vesey’s greatest friends.

He esteems him very highly indeed, and so would you if you knew him.'

Meanwhile, other boats had arrived, and the party had scattered upon the various walks and lawns of the gardens. Some went to see the great *banyan tree*, whose branches throw down shoots which take root and form other branches, until at length one tree becomes almost a forest. Some went to see this rare plant, and some that curious flower, and puzzled over their long Latin names. Some sat in the shade and enjoyed the soft calm air. Above waved the mimosa, the feathery *peepul*, the rustling palm, and all the most beautiful trees of the East. It was indeed the Garden of Eden, a docketed paradise.

'I say, Major, Eden must have been a nice place,' said a moralist under these melancholy boughs.

'Eden, Eden, hey!' replied the Major, using an interjection which the reader must by this time have noticed to be habitual to him. 'Why, I suppose it was!'

'There a woman loved a man, and not—'

‘Hush, hush,’ said the Field-officer, anticipating, apparently, something unseemly in his friend’s thought.

‘I say,’ resumed Mr Simpkin, ‘that Mr Palmer Brown is branded with the letters B. C. S. more deeply than his neighbours.’

‘Hush, Simpkin, for God’s sake! No disparaging remarks about Calcutta officials or Calcutta young ladies.’

The honest Major is in trouble. He always is in trouble. He has just lost a great deal of money to Mr Helter at billiards, and having made a vow not to bet any more money, he is losing cases of beer, guns, and French kid gloves. And to these many sources of irritation he adds, as you know; the pangs of despised love; but although his double loyalty is being put to a rude ordeal, it issues unscathed. This is a paragraph from the fashionable intelligence of the Bengal *Hurkaru*, which has moved these two gentlemen, and rather spoiled their picnic.

‘We hear that a matrimonial alliance is on the *tapis* between a very eminent covenant-

ed civilian, not a hundred miles from the Presidency, and a young lady, whose beauty and merit have only to be known to be appreciated. We need not say that we allude to the niece of an eminent Judge in the *sudder*.'

Perhaps it is this that makes Mr Charles Simpkin utter bitter remarks about the symbolical letters 'B. C. S.'

CHAPTER IX.

THE MAN IN SKY-BLUE.

IN company with the gentle reader I must again take the liberty of invading the chambers occupied by Mr Palmer Brown. Whilst the golden barge is preparing for a start, the Secretary to Government (Foolscap Department) is busily engaged with the contents of a brown-paper parcel just arrived from the establishment of Messrs Slasher and Braidmore, civil and military tailors. A blue frock-coat is on one of the arm-chairs of the apartment (Mr Palmer Brown's bed-room, if you must know all), and that highly appreciated civil officer is standing before a large cheval glass, and viewing, with much satisfaction, a new pair of trousers which he has just put on. He faces towards every point of the compass in turn, but the northern and the eastern and the southern

and the western aspect seem all equally satisfactory. The colour of these garments also is quite delightful, it is a delicate grey picked out with strawberries and cream.

If all this should seem strange in a grave functionary entrusted with some of the most important interests of the colossal empire of Hindustan, I must remind you at once that Mr Palmer Brown was always esteemed very careful about his dress; now minute attention to such details must be much the same process whether the costume be that of a beau or a bishop. This particular pair of trousers has been returned to Messrs Slasher and Braidmore no less than five times, and now you see the fit is perfect. Mr Palmer Brown is a short, fat man, and as such, very particular and fond of showy colours. See now, he is forcing the point of a large coral pin into a sky-blue neck-tie. But sky-blue has a deep meaning to-day, as our readers are well aware.

Mr Palmer Brown puts a leather belt round his waist and fastens it rather tightly. He then puts on a white waistcoat, but not

quite satisfied with it apparently, he takes it off again, and gives the belt another pull. All these movements are watched in silence by the gravest and most decorous of white-robed Sirdars. *Kuria Mutty*, a high-caste Hindu, with a long yellow streak on his forehead, evidently thinks that the toilet of a high officer of state is an important proceeding. He again hands the white waistcoat to his master. But even now it does not give satisfaction.

‘But after all,’ says Mr Palmer Brown, pensively,—he has just taken another long look in the cheval glass, —‘But after all, women love fat men.’

And, upon my word, I really think Mr Palmer Brown is right. Confiding ladies do love fat men. They seem to present something so solid, a rock to which weak souls can cling, a railway buffer to break the shocks of life; a cushion, a dumpling—a dozen suggestions of repose, luxury, and comfort. Depend upon it, there is deep design in making plumpness the chief noticeable attribute of the god of love. And I am quite sure that it

was in a measure owing to this feeling of solidity produced by the presence of weight and bulk that much of Mr Palmer Brown's influence with men also was due. A little thin man might have paraded his sham state-secrets till doomsday without taking anybody in. But when you plainly saw that the possessor of the secret was so substantial and real, you could not help lending some of his substantiality to the secret itself.

I need not say that the trousers of delicate grey (picked out with strawberries and cream) appear to even greater advantage when set off by the blue frock-coat and the white waistcoat. I think I have once said that Mr Palmer Brown's foot was a small one, but small as it is it takes the grave Sirdar *Kuria Mutty* full ten minutes to get on the patent leather boots which are to figure to-day. Mr Palmer Brown is, however, in the best of humours, and bears the delay with much good temper. The bearer then hands him a pair of pale gamboge gloves exactly two sizes too small for him, and Mr Palmer Brown walks

into the sitting-room to put these on. Why ten minutes afterwards when the black servant carries him his handkerchief and a large bottle of scent—why a gentleman who has borne the protracted operation of having his feet pinched, racked, and shampooed into the tightest of boots, should suddenly become angry and call his servant the son of a pig is more than that servant can easily divine. The *Feringhy* race, though wise and brave, have evidently a touch of madness in their composition. Do they not eat beef instead of worshipping it? Do they not convert their ladies at once into idols and *nautch* girls? Do they ever adore the Ganges or burn their widows? But that holy stream is vindictive as well as all-powerful, and confounds their devices. And now it has smitten with madness the sedate Palmer Brown Sahib, a gentleman as fat as a Rajah and as grave as a Brahmin priest.

There was a reason for the said Sahib's change of manner, although it was not to be expected that Sirdar Kuria Mutty would fully

understand it. A letter had been delivered to Mr Palmer Brown just before the bearer came in. This was what it contained :—

‘DEAR MR PALMER BROWN—

‘As you take an interest, I think, in the vacant appointment at Nawaubgunge— (who does not just now ?)—I lose no time in letting you know that papa has just returned from Barrackpore, and has there learnt something which has much surprised him. Government House has pronounced very strongly against Mr Liversege. His decision in the case of Rao Ruck a Muck, the Moulvie fanatic, is objected to. Many thanks for the volume of Poems by Miss Miniver. I agree with you that the piece called “Dead Leaves” is *very beautiful*.

‘Yours very sincerely,

‘EMMA WINDUS.’

No wonder Mr Palmer Brown was disturbed and angry when he read this. No wonder that he called his faithful black

servant hard names. Whether the stroke came from an outraged river-god or an offended bull it was indeed enough to drive the staidest man half mad. The combinations of the most subtle politicians become of course a mere mockery if disturbing forces like this are suddenly introduced into their calculations. The very wisest and most experienced officials in Calcutta had lately come to the conclusion that the Governor-General must fix upon one of two candidates for the Residency of Na-waubunge. Everybody else but Mr Liversege and Mr Wotherspoon had long since been quite out of the betting. Then came the news that Government House had pronounced very strongly against Mr Wotherspoon on account of the affair of the Opium *Gumashtas* at Budge Budge. If ever an Indian political question seemed fixed and certain it was the present one; and now Government House has pronounced against the only other possible candidate, on account of the decision in the case of Rao Ruck a Muck, the Moulvie fanatic. Mr Palmer Brown is thoroughly be-

wildered and perplexed. I doubt if so puzzling a problem has vexed the shrewd Indian political intellect since the days when Lord Minto debated in his mind how he was to get his conquering army back again out of Affghanistan.

For observe, the question has become much more complex than it was when we last saw Mr Palmer Brown deliberating in the solitude of his chamber. It was difficult enough, in all conscience, even then. But this silly paragraph in the Bengal *Hurkaru* has complicated matters terribly. Mrs Windus has read it, he knows that by her manner. The shrewd Calcutta Secretary sees very plainly that that good lady is not to be trifled with much longer. Shall he go boldly to the picnic like a true knight wearing the colours of his lady? Mrs Liversege will take it in the light of an engagement. What of that? The great desire of his heart is of course to become engaged to Sophy; and if marriage should eventually prove quite out of the question, it would be an engagement which

he could easily both back out of at last and deny at present to Mrs Windus.

‘ Hang it, I’ll play the bold and manly game ! ’ said Mr Palmer Brown.

But a few moments’ reflection showed him that the bold and manly game is much too hazardous in the face of the vigilant Mrs Windus, who may at any moment find a permanent Secretary for the Foolscape Department even now. In the terrible uncertainty that lady must now be made his first study. Perhaps this sentimental official’s position at present is one of the nicest that ever bewildered a public man and a lover, and all through the absurd uncertainty at Government House about this tiresome vacant Residency at Nawaubgunge.

It is to be noticed that in each of his schemes the sentimental difficulties are never much dwelt on. The great man seems to have lived so long in the East that there is something of Oriental confidence in his courtship. Calcutta seems one large bazar, where the most beautiful slaves await the nod of the

most wealthy and exalted of the Emperor's great officers of state. Mr Palmer Brown has lived a long time in India. Mr Palmer Brown has lived many years in Calcutta. He is shrewd and practical where his own immediate personal interest is concerned. He has flirted with many young and graceful ladies, and gained much knowledge of the intricacies of the Anglo-Indian female heart. He believes he is sentimental, and is confident that he is a ladies' man. And it does seem an odd result of all this widely-culled experience, that a short, stout, middle-aged Pacha should think that he has only to shake a sky-blue handkerchief at a beautiful woman, and she is made happy for ever.

India is a paradox. French philosophers, puzzled with the world's contradictions, have gone so far as to assert that irony is the basis of the Divine system, which is a very French way of putting the matter. Perhaps this irony is in the particular inherent retribution of each moral offence; or are the offenders given over to a sardonic Mephistophelean spirit of ill, who

smiles a cold cruel smile, as he filches all elation from the cup of the drunkard, all joy from the kiss of the voluptuary, all luxury from the gold of the miser, all the flimsy comforts of vanity from those who worship vain things. And how must such a spirit revel in India, the Eden of inconsistencies, the empire of Counting-house Moguls, Boshington-Clives, Cit-Conquerors ; and of mushroom Brahmins, who contemn and imitate the swarthy Pundits, whose pedigree is of forty centuries ! There Buddhism jostles with Romanism, and Exeter Hall strives to teach ascetic pietism to the races who gave it originally to Europe. There pseudo-Brahminical Conservatism wars with Anglo-Saxon energy ; there decayed London courtiers find a snug asylum, and poor soldiers the career of talents. There many of the brightest heroisms of English story show side by side with the blackest crimes ; and in this particular year of our Lord, what strange contrasts might we not set down if we had leisure to pursue them to the death !—but we are writing at present about Mr Palmer Brown,

and the tremendous political 'difficulty' which is now presented to his practised diplomatic mind. It is neither more nor less than this : shall he wear a sky-blue neck-tie, or shall he take it off? Is it not a whimsical retribution (not altogether unworthy of our sardonic Mephistophelean spirit !) that the best-informed official in Calcutta should be thrown into this excruciating dilemma, from a simple want of official information?

I may mention here, that whilst able Calcutta government men are engaged with such tremendous issues ; in the Palace of Delhi, the venerable representative of the old Moguls has had a strange dream narrated to him. Hus-san Uskeeree, a soothsayer of great repute (and so devoted to the king that he has taken advantage of his miraculous power to cut off twenty years of his own life, and to add them on to that of his monarch), has seen in a vision a mighty storm arise in the west, black and terrible as an Indian cyclone. Huge impervious dust-clouds preceded its march and darkened the earth, amid lightnings and thun-

ders. Trees were torn up by the roots, cities ruined, rivers diverted into new channels, and the whole country wasted by the force of the unrelenting deluge; but the form of the king reclining peaceably on his royal bed floated safely over the waters, and weathered the hurricane. This is the dream that Hussan Uskeeree has lately told to the King of Delhi, and that monarch is a little startled at the soothsayer's interpretation of it. Will it come true? That is the question!

CHAPTER X.

COLD-WATER CURE.

BUT, as we said before, the gong has sounded for tiffin. A huge marquee has been pitched, the great state tent borrowed from the Lieutenant-Governor of the Sunderbunds.

A Lieutenant-governor travels about with as much magnificence as a Soobahdar of Bengal in olden times. He has his tents and his yacht, his long trains of elephants and camels, his English civilians, his Aide-de-camp, his numerous native officials, his guard of honour, and his army of chuprassies. At night he sits in great state in his canvas palace, and entertains the grandees of the land. Mr Curzon once commanded the two companies of Sepoys sent with this magnificent camp, and told Charley Simpkin these

details, and all this unwieldy pomp touched that youthful humourist. Perhaps an hour before, all the big-wigs of the province, collectors, commissioners, Rajahs with a royal pedigree of centuries, had attended the great man's *levée*, where Mr Curzon and his sub., Mr Hodges, had put on their full-dress uniforms, and figured, by request, as Aides-de-camp; and now these latter sit down and enjoy their stately repast in company with some of the most rising public men in India. Well, well, the natives of the Sunderbunds must be fully impressed with the importance of the paramount Government. See, the guard turns out, the drums beat, the sentries present arms, above floats the great Union Jack of England on a large flag-staff, and the great officer enters the banqueting-hall, the English gentlemen rise up, and the native servants fall prostrate. He takes his seat. The silver covers are removed. The private secretary says grace, and the company falls to.

And now the colossal banqueting-tent of this great Pacha is pitched in the shade of the

mimosas and looks white, square, prim, and luxurious. Two long tables are quite covered with flowers, plate, fruits, and the confectionery of Messrs Gunter and Co., who have a branch establishment in Calcutta. As the guests take their seats Mrs Liversege feels a pardonable elation. She has done the thing very well, and does not yet know that her flourish of trumpets has sounded 'Victory' much too soon. I am forced to admit, however, that her entertainment, though splendid, has been hitherto a little dull. Calcutta society is official, formal, languid, frigid, little moved by smooth, green lawns, bright flowers, and huge rustling trees—more moved, but not much moved, by Gunter's confectionery and sparkling champagne. At the sound of the gong several parties of well-dressed ladies and gentlemen conclude their sedate walks, and take their seats in the tent. The banquet is at first very solemn, but the champagne by-and-by gives it a little life. Soon peals of laughter and merry voices are heard at one end of the table, but that end is occupied by Mr Chiffney

Chaffney, and his young friends, male and female, and we know that Mr Chiffney Chaffney is a Bengal civilian, whom no one has ever yet accused of excessive prim dignity and taciturn dulness.

This young gentleman and his co-mates flirted a little with Miss Sophy Brabazon on board the Sunderbunds' Budgerow, but they are now coquetting with their old flame, Miss Wotherspoon, once more—Mrs Liversege was obliged to ask that young beauty, and to forget for the moment that she belongs to the Prettijohn interest, because no Calcutta party is complete without Miss Wotherspoon. When Mr Chiffney Chaffney read the paragraph in the Bengal *Hurkaru* about an approaching marriage in high life, he took on again with the Prettijohn *belle*. To use this young gentleman's own expressive terminology, he at once 'shunted' Miss Sophy Brabazon. And I need not say that this change of affection meant likewise an alteration of sentiment in the breasts of his four young friends. The whole party marched off in a body into the

camp of the enemy, and now they nudge each other, and giggle and joke about Miss Wother-spoon in private corners once again. Also, now in the great tent they sit round her and laugh and banter and pay their united addresses. They sacrifice to her libations of wine, and I am sorry to say their worship takes a more hurtful form. A brave field-officer, unable to obtain a place at quite another part of the table, has been compelled to sit down in the midst of them. And now in the honour of their beautiful goddess they are offering up a human sacrifice, and *roasting* an unfortunate fellow-creature. I need not say that the name of their victim is Pulfington Belper.

Charley Simpkin was standing near Sophy Brabazon when the gong sounded. Both were talking to Mrs Vesey, indeed Sophy, who, as we have said, had not been over civil to that lady, had, nevertheless, been strangely attracted to her from time to time. Charley at once offered his arm to the young beauty, leaving Captain Ashleigh to go to tiffin with Mrs Vesey.

Sophy was irresolute ; indeed, at first she flatly refused.

‘ I am engaged—that is, I think I am engaged to somebody else,’ and she looked round the gardens with some eagerness.

But she took his arm at last and went with him into the cool shady tent. He hardly knew whether she was most vexed or pleased with it. She was flippant, kind, petulant, and taciturn as the mood struck her. But under all the young man noticed that there was something which made her sorrowful and pensive. He had never seen her look so beautiful before, never seen her look so grave. Charley showed a great deal of proper spirit on the occasion, he was very kind, very thoughtful, he took her petulance with the greatest good humour, and when in the middle of the most delicious little confab, she suddenly darted away and talked for ten minutes to Mr Duffin, a lank, stupid man on the Board of Revenue, Charley only smiled sadly at her forced animation, and de-

voted himself to her just as patiently when she condescended to return to him. ‘ Hang it all ! ’ If she can be so cut up for that official merry andrew, there must be something in her ! ’ He glanced at her pale face and muttered to himself the words of the grim ‘ *Ironside*,’

‘ Thus were a woman wise as well as sweet ! ’

and then handed her Nesselrode pudding, *leeches*, and all the other delicacies, and acted with a great deal of consideration. He is bringing his mighty passion from the clouds into the commonplace world, and I think it is improving in consequence. He showed much delicacy and good feeling at this particular tiffin party, and the philosophical historian begins from this moment to treat his love with greater respect. True, it was idealistic, subjective, lofty, before ; but now that he is soothing a little wounded, fluttering, unwise spirit, if more commonplace, it is less selfish. I warn you all that I shall have to write some much more sentimental

chapters regarding it shortly, and so you must be prepared.

‘The *leeches* as you say is a nice fruit, sir. I hope you were not very angry because I spoke just now to Mr Duffin.’

‘I tore my hair a little, and ground my teeth a great deal.’

‘I see you did the latter, and am afraid I interrupted your lunch before. Take some more of that pie, there’s a good boy.’

‘A growing lad, you think. Thank you very much ; and now what’s the next sagacious remark you’re going to make ?’

‘Don’t be pert, sir ; let me see, you have not been as saucy as usual to-day, have you, sir !’

‘Saucy, define !’

‘Oh, “witty,” I dare say you call it.’

‘Oh, yes, I have ! It’s all the effect of contrast !’

‘Effect of contrast, what do you mean ?’

‘Why, of course, after Mr Duffin’s brilliant story of the *Chowkeydar* !’

‘Hush! What right had you to listen. Don’t be severe, sir.’

‘No, I won’t, if you’ll promise to take one of these French *bonbons*!’

‘Tut, bonbons are nonsense. I hate flip-pant, conceited, clever people.’

‘Then I won’t be clever, amusing, entertaining!’

‘Military ladies like them. Don’t they. That Miss Blenkinsop! I suppose you are very amusing to her!’

‘Yes, we all try to be funny, indeed Major Pulfington Belper usually stands on his head when he enters her drawing-room. Wouldn’t you like to see him do it.’

The young lady gave an angry toss of her head. She had been flushed, excited, petulant during the last speech or two, and in the Ensign’s opinion, very beautiful. To-day it is not easy to soothe her.

There was a short pause in the conversation.

‘I’m in a horribly bad temper, to-day, am I not?’

‘Are you? I don’t know. It must be the Indian climate, if you are.’

‘India! I am beginning to hate India.’

‘Oh, it has its good and bad points.’

‘I think it is artificial, mercenary, false. You are too much of a boy yet, to understand all these things. Look round there, the sun is bright, the trees green and pleasant, the flowers lovely, and yet in this Eden is nothing but deceit, envy, and base competition for rank and wealth. I wish we were in the steamer again, Charley. It was pleasant that steamer.’

‘I didn’t object to it, I admit,’ said the Ensign kindly. He thought if he could always be called ‘Charley,’ from such lips, he would not mind sailing about the Styx, in Charon’s yacht, for ever and ever.

‘I liked it. Mrs Vesey was so kind. Everybody, you were kind then. Now, I don’t know what it is, all seems changed, and one can’t tell whom to trust, whom to respect.’

‘Surely you can trust Mrs Vesey,’ he said gently.

‘I suppose I can,’ she said pensively, ‘yes, —what am I saying?—of course I can trust Mrs Vesey.’

‘And trust yourself.’

‘What do you mean, sir?’

‘Why, that you are to be trusted of all people in the world. That’s my private opinion!’

‘You are a good child. By-the-by, though, if you cease to be cutting, witty, critical, impertinent, I shall cease to trust you, sir.’

‘I’ll do anything to please you, and yet your conduct and your remarks, and everything this morning, not excepting that grey dress, are so satisfactory, that I really don’t see how I can pull you to pieces.’

‘Don’t be silly, sir. Tell me this, is not your life in a military cantonment very idle and unprofitable? I hear it is. People here, —I mean the Civil Service—say dreadful things of you.’

‘Unprofitable—to us it is—twopence half-penny a day. Unprofitable to them—No! As we hold India.’

‘There seems to be a coolness between your service and theirs.’

‘If they tell you all these things, I should say that the coolness is chiefly with them.’

‘Tell me this, will you do me a favour?’

‘Of course, I will, Miss Sophy Brabazon.’

‘Perhaps it is *very* important. Perhaps it is a great secret. Perhaps I shall require you to be awfully confidential and mysterious; are you too giddy to be trusted?’

‘Nonsense, go on. I’ll do anything you like.’

‘Mind, I don’t say it is anything very important or confidential. Have you heard if there is any fresh news to-day about the appointment of Nawaubgunge?’

‘*Toujours* Nawaubgunge,’ muttered Mr Simpkin. ‘No, I have not.’

‘Well, would you ask, and find out if there is, and tell me? You know my aunt is so interested, but you won’t be giddy!’

The portion of the tent where these two were sitting was a little dark. The backs of their chairs were against the orange and black

wall of the tent, and Sophy's little hand hung down by her side. Whether or not there was any necessity for the action, Mr Simpkin here furtively seized that little hand and gave it a prolonged squeeze, nodding his head in answer to her question.

‘I thought that was coming,’ he muttered to himself a few minutes afterwards. ‘But I’ll do it, by George I will, and help her while I can. How beautiful she looked when she was angry! and by heaven I never saw her pensive and sorrowful before. She’s a thorough woman, sentimental, flippant, petulant, variable, but she has a heart. It was awfully jolly whilst it lasted, but I suppose there is a serpent in every Eden, even this one. Is he really more subtle than those other beasts, I wonder,—or is he a toy snake, a puffed up bladder with sham wriggle and hiss. She really seems to like him. Well, well, I suppose a woman must be true to the logic of her nature, consistent with her inconsistency, immoveable in her weakness!’ And Mr Simpkin hurried off to find out the latest in-

telligence about Nawaubgunge, with as much feverish bustle as if he had been a quidnunc upon the "Secretaries' walk."'

Meanwhile the tiffin had been enjoyed with a certain starched and grave relish by the generality of the assembled guests. Mrs Liversege was very much put out by the absence of Mr and Mrs Windus, and still more so by the mysterious defection of Mr Palmer Brown. What could have happened? She put off the hour of the lunch three-quarters of an hour, and then was forced to content herself with the arm of Mr Ignatius, a highly talented gentleman in the Secretariat (Reprimand Department). Mr Ignatius was a lean, bilious man of sacerdotal appearance, famous for his straightforward logic. It must not be thought that every high Calcutta official, like the gods of the Indian mythology, is bulky. Mrs Liversege would probably have had a very different appetite for tiffin if she had known all that Mr Ignatius could have told her, for he was really behind the scenes. That gentleman smiled

blandly, and answered politely, as she prattled with much volubility and ignorance upon her favourite topic of Indian state affairs. In a pause of the conversation, when she had said something more wrong than usual, he asked her to take wine with much priestly suavity.

You must not be shocked. Every country has its customs. Mrs Liversege in aim is refined, over-refined, and yet under the lea of a golden barge, within a stately tabernacle, and in the midst of the highest and best drest people of India, who really looked up to her, this is what Mrs Liversege replied to Mr Ignatius' question.

‘Thank you, Mr Ignatius, I’ll take beer!’

Mr Liversege, who is not altogether in his right element at a *fête champêtre*, has escorted Mrs Whitehead in to lunch. He does not get on very well with that lady of rank. Mrs Whitehead is sixteen, babyish, silly, and for her tender years by far the biggest coquette in India. She has just married old Mr Whitehead, the senior member of the Rice Committee. She is proud of her dress, which

is the most expensive there. She is proud of being taken in by the Governor of the feast. But that staid old Governor and she have little in common, and she soon looks horribly bored, and glances towards an excessively well-tailored Aide-de-camp who has tried to get a seat near her but failed. Captain Lemesurier has long since deserted Miss Sophy Brabazon. Captain Spink now tardily follows his example. He sits moodily drinking his wine. He has had his revenge. Lemesurier fresh from Barrackpore told him the important decision about Rao Ruck a Muck, and Captain Spink with the insight of a rival has detected the cards of Mr Palmer Brown's game. He went up to Sophy directly he caught sight of her in the garden, and spoke to her these words, which were meant to be very rude and cutting.

‘How d’ye do, Miss Brabazon? I’m afraid you won’t see the future Secretary to Nawaubgunge to-day. I saw him rushing about the club just now in a distracted state, and in a splendid sky-blue tie. Bad news,

that's the cause—Your uncle's not to get Nawaubgunge! How nice your dress looks to be sure!'

And now having relieved his mind, or rather his bile, for perhaps the disorder of this sentimental captain was more in the liver than the breast, he sips his champagne with a relish, and a drop having fallen on his neck-tie, he wipes it off and then becomes savage once more, for that tie is of beautiful *mauve* haberdashery. He looks grandly towards Sophy, and glares at her through his eyeglass, for this officer is short-sighted.

A short-sighted officer! upon my word and honour! He has the winning trump of the game unexpectedly dealt to him by fortune, and he sillily lets the queen of hearts escape. Chance suddenly throws in his way what he had long schemed for and desired, and he cannot conquer his own vanity and sulkiness. If a woman be worth the winning, and a loyal manly young fellow worthy of his spurs in the Governor-General's Body Guard, you would think he would ride boldly

home when he sees his rival embarrassed by sordid indecision. But Captain Spink prefers revenge to consolation ; and the worship of the Thug, to the chivalrous devotion of an armed man on horse-back. He seizes the choker (a beautiful mauve one), and chokes off—his own silly self.

Two other armed men, both affected with the passion of love, are in that garden to-day, and both of these meritoriously pursue a line of conduct quite different from that adopted by the petulant captain. They are generous, chivalrous, and self-restrained, and yet I am bound to say that each comes to great trouble before the day is over.

Simpkin, after pumping very nearly everybody at the picnic, at last gets the truth from Captain Lemesurier himself. He hastens to Miss Sophy with the news, but the Captain has good-naturedly anticipated him. Sophy is with Mr and Mrs Vesey and Captain Ashleigh ; she seems quite to cling to Mrs Vesey now. I am sure Charley Simpkin used every possible delicacy and caution. He waited

patiently until chance gave him opportunity of speaking to her quite alone. He talked for half an hour with Mr Vesey, and though that gentleman's conversation was always sensible, and his manner courteous, Crichton's politeness and Sydney Smith's humour might bore a young gentleman under twenty who is kept by them from the woman he loves. At last the lucky moment arrived, and he whispered to her very kindly,

‘I have kept my promise and got you the news.’

‘Oh, how tiresome you are, you stupid boy!’

This reply took Mr Simpkin rather aback. The young lady spoke very angrily and very rudely too for that matter.

The other man at arms, a soldier of rank, is quite as long-suffering and chivalric as Mr Simpkin, and yet before the day is out, he is destined to take a part in a very critical adventure indeed, as you shall presently hear.

Major Pulfington Belper, though much in the habit of looking on matters through the

medium of an honest self-satisfaction, has been compelled to confess that his love affairs are not progressing as favourably as he could wish. The Major, as we have before said, has had much experience in these tender matters, and this veteran officer, if any one, should be able to tell when the battle is going against him. But long before the fatal paragraph had appeared in the fashionable intelligence of the Bengal *Hurkaru*, Major Pulfington Belper had taken a very sombre view of his sentimental prospects.

‘The devotion of the *Durveesh* is the only devotion understood now-a-days. Hey, hey!’

His sense of failure and the cause of it he frankly communicated to his young friends at the billiard and mess tables. He is a man without any unseemly mystery and reserve, and the elations, depressions, fears, and hopes of his many love histories, are always described as soon as they are felt. If few have suffered more, few have laid claim to a wider sympathy than Major Pulfington Belper.

And in this little love story the Major has

had his moments of elation. Did the young lady encourage him? Some writers tell us that every woman is at heart a coquette, carrying the instinct to the grave with her, and, like the kitten, commencing to worry and clutch directly her eyes are open. The Major was very confident at times that he was the favoured suitor. And then he would see in her rebuffs and coldness a delicious scheme to entangle him still more deeply.

‘Depend upon it, Simpkin, my boy, I understand them all by this time. Odd enough if I did not!’

Mr Simpkin, on this occasion, agreed that it would be odd enough if Major Pulfington Belper, considering his many opportunities of studying the subject, did not understand them all.

‘Reading them backwards is all empirical. Every woman that you will meet in this world will act exactly like her neighbour, mark that! She will seem to dote on you one day, and the next you’ll be puzzling your head to know what mortal offence you have quite inadvertently

given her. Have you paid too much or too little attention? been too dull or too witty?—such and similar questions, if you pursue them, will puzzle you till the grave gives up its secrets. You have not offended her in the least, Simpkin, my boy, she is tired of petting you, which is one great feminine pleasure, and she wants a little row with you, which is the other great feminine pleasure. One day she would pet Lucifer, and the next she would quarrel with Gabriel the Archangel. Now, I don't want it to go any further, but a certain young lady—'

'An entangler, Major?'

'Yes, an elegant entangler, hey! That young lady is not very civil to me just now. But I don't mind! I am not one bit depressed or deceived. By-and-by you'll fish for the *Maha sir* or Indian salmon!'

'Yes, Major.'

'Well, take my advice, first of all go to some young lady and take a lesson. The true principles of fly-fishing are best known—'

'By elegant entanglers! Eh, Major?'

And now on the day of the grand luncheon,

which I must say the poor Major did not much enjoy, he is destined to be elated with hope once more. Amid all the green enchantments of a delicious grove, a beautiful Titana will be fascinated by him to all appearance, and he will not detect his long ears or his bray. The camphor-cinnamon, and the sandal tree, the scarlet *butea*, and the fan palms of Eden, will lull his day-dream, and our unwise friend will quite mistake the nature of the paradise into which he is cast. Well, well, you will laugh at him I dare say, as thousands of his other friends have done before you. You will ridicule his pretensions to Miss Sophy, and withhold your sympathy from a bosom which has been so frequently prodded and punctured before. You will say that his love is in himself, like the virtue of Iago, that it is bred of Vanity (like yours and mine, dear young lady!) and has in fact little to do with the shifting object that momentarily arrests its transient attention. All this may be true, but elation is elation, and mortification, mortification, though felt under a waist

which is more the waist of a Brevet Major than the waist of a Captain, and I think there are indications that *one* passion of the Major's was less fleeting than the others. It is also true that our grotesque friend must have a large stock of love in his composition. How is it that we laugh at the loves of old people, and best like to read about them? The present century has teemed with pleasant idyls. It has sympathized with Lord Lara and his boisterous sighs, with Quentin Durward, and several other brave and handsome young Scotchmen, it has had the sad idyl of Launcelot and Guinivere, and that of Arthur Pendennis, and the Fotheringay (a favourite idyl of mine I am free to admit), but the idyl of Mr Weller and the widow has distanced them all, as Uncle Toby once beat all rival lovers, and lean cudgelled Quixote, and the fat Knight who loved the merry wife of Windsor. I wish M. Taine, or some other intelligent foreigner, would tell us why it is that we English do not very much care for the pipings of very young shepherds. They bore us. We take

them rather as a matter of course. Perhaps we are not really a poetical people, as the countrymen of Lamartine often tell us.

Sophy was walking with Captain Ashleigh when Major Pulfington Belper accosted her. The Captain gave way to the senior officer, but the latter did not make much progress with the young lady at first. He quoted to her a description of Adam and Eve in Eden, taken from Milton, and some pretty lines from the *Paradise* and the *Peri*, but these literary reminiscences, though highly appropriate to the locality, bored Miss Sophy Brazazon. In company with others the Major was struck with the fact that to-day it seems difficult to please her.

‘Captain Ashleigh! I am afraid I drove him away!’ The Major said this at a venture, and made a lucky shot.

‘Did you, Major Pulfington Belper!’ said the young lady in a careless way, which seemed to leave it in doubt whether the driving away of tiresome people might not sometimes be a benefit.

‘At Nawaubgunge, formerly, he used to be thought rather a lady’s man. You know what a lady’s man is, Miss Brabazon?’

‘What! Were you ever at Nawaubgunge?’ said Miss Sophy, brightening up.

‘Oh yes, I was there some time!’

‘Nawaubgunge! I have heard a great deal about Nawaubgunge. Let me see, did you know Mr Palmer Brown there?’

‘Yes, he was magistrate, first at *Chucker-gotty* and then came in to the station. He is a great man now. The Heaven-born service, you know!’

‘Yes, yes; you military men are very severe on the civilians.’

‘Oh, Miss Brabazon, you must not misunderstand me. I think him a highly-talented official.’

‘You also knew, then, my cousin.’

‘Yes, Miss Brabazon.’

‘Did you see much of her?’

‘A great deal, especially before she married.’

The Major’s manner had become suddenly

constrained, and this seemed odd, in this most frank and communicative of men. Sophy had heard all the odd features of his character detailed over and over again. Charley Simpkin kept her informed on these and similar points.

‘People say such funny things. They say I am a little like her; is that a fact?’

‘Very like. It struck Ashleigh. It struck me. It struck the Veseys. A very remarkable likeness indeed, and yet you know—’

‘Yes, what?’

‘I mean, you know; you are like in some things, but not, of course, in others!’

‘I don’t understand quite — why, of course?’

‘Yes, I didn’t mean that, for I, for one, always said that the fault was not altogether on one side.’

‘Fault, pray explain—what do you mean?’ said Miss Sophy, with much eagerness.

‘Oh, I forgot, you didn’t know,’ stammered the Major, ‘I meant—that is—I didn’t mean anything at all!’

‘Major Pulfington Belper!’ said the young

girl, quickly. 'You have said so much, that I must ask you to say more. Pray tell me all you know upon the subject. Every one I ask looks mysterious, and will tell me nothing. Tell me all, I entreat it as a favour!'

'Oh, I really meant nothing!' said the Major, whose nose was very red, and who was terribly confused. 'That is,—you understand, Miss Brabazon, I would tell you everything if I could. I would do anything to serve you, of all people, but you know there may be subjects that a man is not allowed to speak about.'

'Major Pulfington Belper, I know there is some secret connected with my family.'

'Secret! I didn't say there was any secret!'

'But I know there is. Pray tell it me. I should be so much obliged to you!'

'I cannot,' he cried, 'I cannot say any more, do not ask me! But, this I will say, I knew Ada Brabazon before her marriage, and a kinder, truer, lovelier creature never walked the earth. What they tell you is true, Miss

Brabazon, she was like you—the image of you—I was struck with the likeness, the moment I set eyes on you!’

It was at this moment that the Major was in the middle of his fool’s paradise. He had never interested the young lady so much before. The two were walking towards the boats. The party was breaking up. He is shortly to awake from his day-dream with a rude shock.

Poor Sophy, her cobweb fancies are also being rapidly demolished. From what she has just learnt there can be little doubt that Mr Palmer Brown was as much in fault as his wife—if anything occurred, and from all this mystery it would seem that something must have occurred. The young lady feels feverish, hot, oppressed. The terrible picnic has brought so much that is worrying. When the malicious Captain Spink first brought her the news, she felt a choking in the throat, and thought she would have dropt, but somehow when Captain Lemesurier confirmed the same intelligence, she seemed almost glad that it was

true. Had two short hours swept away her eternal passion? What would Mr and Mrs Vesey say? What would Dora Staidleigh think of the sudden collapse of this love story? That letter, with its silly superlatives, was still on its way across the seas, and the man who was so genuine had already vindicated his solidity and truth! Alas, if it is the lot of every man to be deceived by some woman, is not woman in her turn taken in by us? Let us all bear the amiable deceit with as much temper as we can.

The barge of Mr Windus was at the ghaut, but outside of a pinnace and a dinghy, and from the deck of the latter a narrow plank was thrown across to enable the passengers of the barge to get on board. The Major mounted this plank to help up Miss Sophy. That young lady suddenly caught sight of Miss Wother-spoon, her old rival, who had this time taken a passage in the Sunderbunds' yacht, and with her were the young Civilians and Captain Spink.

'He has told her about the sky-blue trimmings!' she said to herself, and felt half

inclined to throw herself into the yellow river beneath her, which seemed so calm and inviting, in spite of the stories of Mrs Vesey about its treacherous currents.

And now, in an ill-advised moment, the fatal Major commences to assist her up the plank. He has got her firmly by the hand, and they have got half way across, when in a fit of extra politeness he half turns towards her, and proceeding in a sidelong scraping manner, suddenly misses his footing, and before he can let go his hold, he and Sophy both fall into the deep, yellow water, which is gliding smoothly below them.

A cry of horror breaks from the deck of the Golden Barge. The men shout, the ladies faint, the danger from the deep river and its treacherous under-current is seen by all. Charley Simpkin who is at the stern of the vessel seizes a rope of Indian hemp, secures one end to the stern, then quickly lashes the other end to his body, and jumps in. Suddenly he feels a hand seize him by the leg. It is the most delicious moment of his life. He

will nobly revenge the young lady's coquetry and unkindness. He gets his head above water and shouts to Messrs Chiffney Chaffney and Pelter, who are at the stern of the barge. The rope is hauled up, and Mr Charles Simpkin finds that he has saved the life of Major Pulfington Belper.

Meantime the decorous passengers on board the Golden Budgerow have worked themselves up into a terrible state of excitement. The danger is great in the extreme. Mr Welter has tried to start off the *dinghy* which lies between the larger vessels. Five active native sailors are on it watching the disaster. Every native can swim like a fish, but instead of now lending any aid, they content themselves with pious abstract ejaculations about the goodness of Allah. The calamity could not have come unless it was ordained by fate, and to disturb such ordinances is palpably wicked. Mr Welter entreats, urges, scolds, but his Hindustani is not of the best. Suddenly Mr Liversege comes to his assistance on this point. That

reserved and warm-hearted old gentleman has been rushing about in a most frantic state ever since the calamity occurred, and till now has only succeeded in increasing the hubbub and confusion. But noticing the difficulties of Mr Welter, he springs on board the dinghy, and the amount of fearful bad language that this most cautious of civil servants now brings to bear upon the apathetic black sailors is amazing. He storms, he urges, he threatens, but still can do little to move those aquatic fatalists.

All this time, upon the bank about thirty or forty yards down the stream, a man was standing watching the water. He was without hat or coat, and little attention was paid to him. Suddenly he plunged into the water, or rather skimmed over it with short, quick strokes, and after swimming a short distance he dived. Many eager and anxious eyes watched the circles in the water where last he had disappeared. The stern of the state yacht was now crowded, and the anxiety was oppressive. Soon something appears again on the surface of the water about five-and-

twenty yards further down the stream, but it is difficult to make out what it is. Mr Liversege, and Mr Welter, and Charley Simpkin, and Mr Chiffney Chaffney now force the *dinghy wallahs* to pull off. They hold the boatmen down to their oars, and urge them on with bad language and blows. They follow the indistinct object floating upon the surface of the water, and soon recognize two human heads to their inexpressible joy. In four minutes a young lady and a gentleman are hauled up into the deck of the *dinghy*. Captain Ashleigh had succeeded in saving the life of Miss Sophy Brabazon.

Ensign Charles Simpkin had also the proud feeling that on that day he had been instrumental in saving the life of a fellow-creature.

And yet he was not altogether satisfied.

END OF VOL. I.

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